the weekly
Standard

FEBRUARY 26, 1996 $2.95

ANGST-RIDDEN REPUBLICANS
FRED BARNES • DAVID BROOKS

MR. HACKNEY'S OPUS

Listening to a "National Conversation," Courtesy of the Clinton Administration

by Matt Labash

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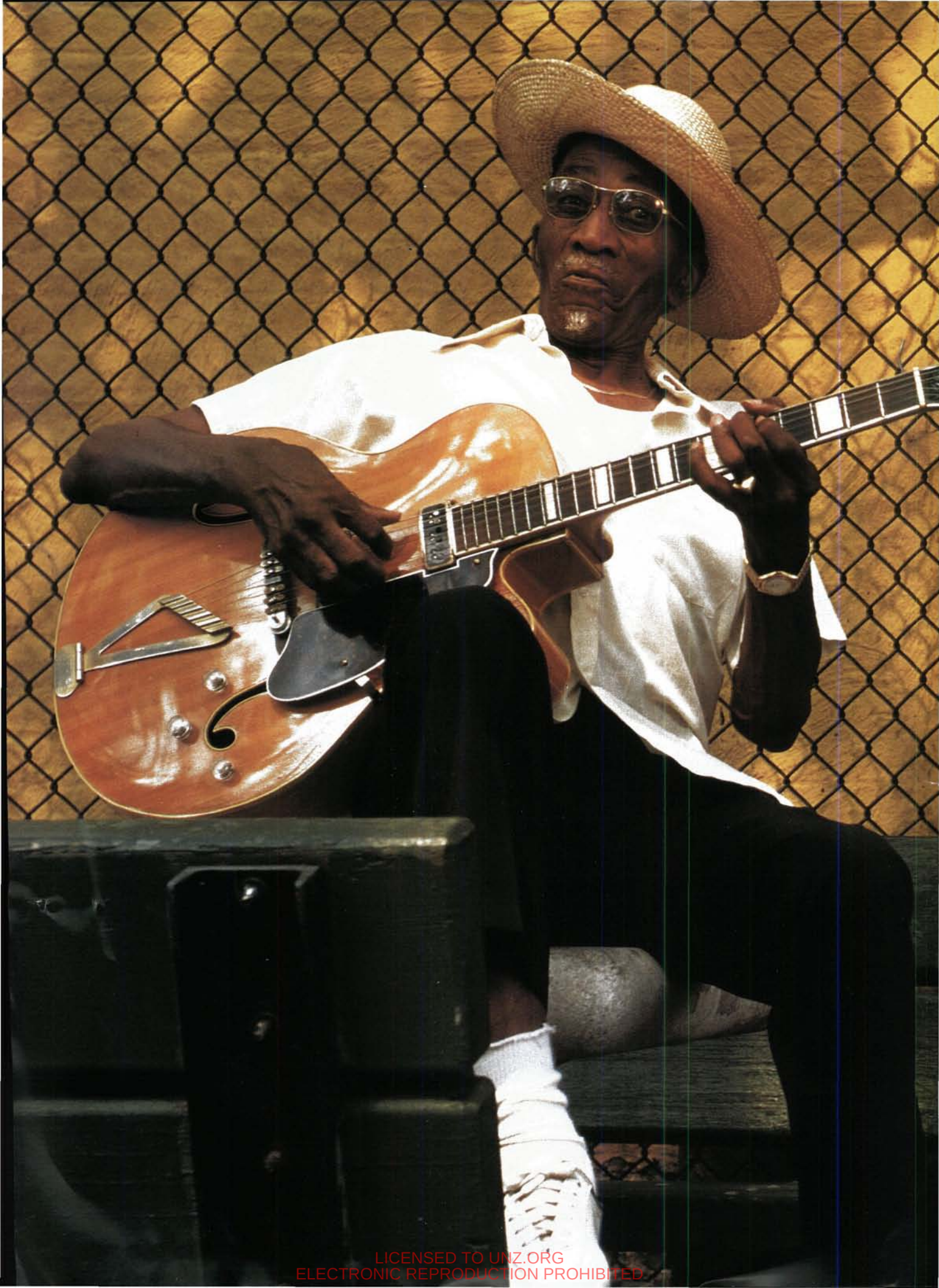

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"After a while, nothing helped my knees. I had to have something done."

WALTER J. PERRY
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Walter "The Buzzard" Perry says he was born to be a songwriter. In fact, he carried his guitar with him on the Italian front during World War II and serenaded his platoon. But 15 years ago, he started singing a different kind of blues.

It all began with an aching and swelling in his knees. Some days he couldn't stay at work, the pain was so bad. He even fell in the street and couldn't get up on his own. "I just stayed at home—shut in," he remembers. "It was awful."

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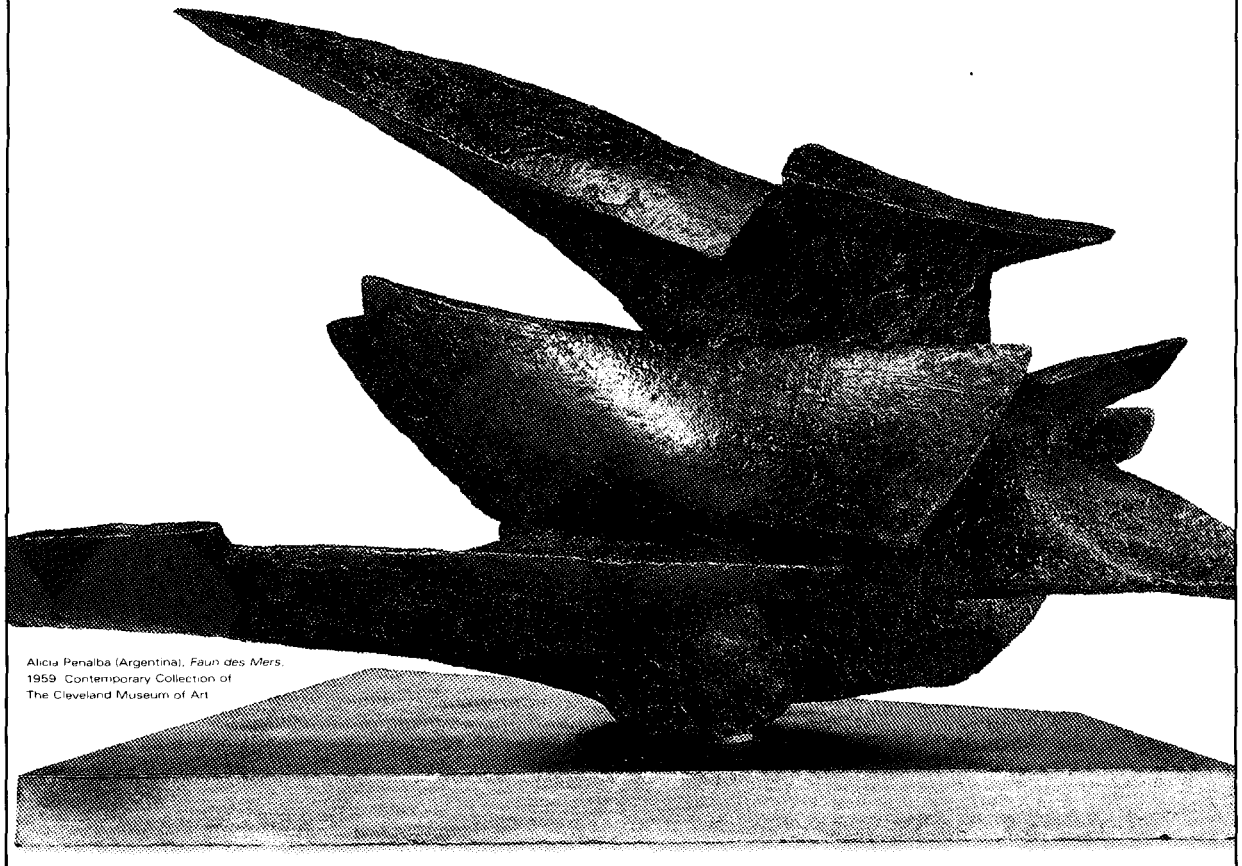
Yet each has something very different to say.



Alicia Penalba (Argentina), *Faun des Mers*, 1959. Contemporary Collection of The Cleveland Museum of Art

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the weekly Standard

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Got to Give It Up

What's next in Congress? An answer may not come until the end of March. That's when congressional Republicans are planning to convene in Philadelphia to consider their policy agenda. The goal of the Philadelphia conference, says a House leadership aide, is to "remind people why they voted for Republicans."

There's one fight many top Republicans think should be avoided: trying once again to win passage of a balanced budget in seven years using Congressional Budget Office numbers. Republicans fear getting bogged down in negotiations with the White House and then getting blamed again for the likely failure to reach agreement. The preferred strategy of many top Republicans, including chief appropriators Rep. Bob Livingston and Sen. Ted Stevens, is simply to wrap the remaining appropriations bills into a continuing resolution that would last through the end of 1996 and to forget about the entitlement reforms needed to get to a balanced budget.

Republicans will then devote themselves to blaming the White House for its veto of a balanced budget and using this as an argument for electing a GOP president.

There's debate over this: Newt Gingrich prefers a strategy of repeated 30-day continuing resolutions in order to keep the pressure on President Clinton, and House Budget Committee chairman John Kasich remains convinced a deal can be struck between Republicans and moderate Democrats. Wishful thinking, say some congressional aides, who predict the Livingston/Stevens strategy will prevail. All in all, it looks like the great defining issues of the day—balanced budget, tax cuts, etc.—will have to wait until the election.

But Does It Come with a V-Chip?

When the Secret Service closed off Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House last year, rollerbladers immediately claimed the abandoned roadway as their own. Entirely predictable—roaches do the same thing to vacant apartments. Now two Washington architects, Doug Michels and James Allegro, have come up with a better idea: the National Sofa.

"This is serious," says a spokesman for the Sofa. And it is. The architects hope to talk the National Park Service into accepting their design of a curved, 300-foot marble sofa in Lafayette Park, which is separated from the White House by Pennsylvania Avenue. The sofa would seat 100, and a "jumbotron" TV screen would be built for their viewing pleasure. Interactive, of course: Cameras would be placed around the White House, so that the First Family, when they wish, could talk to the tourists, crack addicts, flashers, and anti-nuclear head cases who frequent the park. The spokesman tells us: "If Chelsea is making a peanut butter sandwich down in the kitchen at 3 a.m. and she wants to switch on the TV and talk to the American people, she can." She's a lucky girl.

Architect Michels has experience in persuading bureaucrats to let him do crazy things. He's the designer of Cadillac Ranch, an "auto-monument" along Route 66, in which the backsides of upended old Cadillacs rise up from the barren earth. A big sofa and a big TV reflect the same pointless creativity. If he adds a big can of beer, he'll probably pull this thing off.

Take a Laxalt-ive

Former Nevada Republican senator Paul Laxalt used the *Manchester Union Leader* to lay into Steve Forbes the morning after the Iowa caucuses. Forbes's sin? Running ads showing Ronald Reagan warmly applauding Forbes's efforts as an executive for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. "Shame on him," Laxalt told the paper. "Reagan always said he had to remain neutral during the primaries and consistently refused to endorse other candidacies."

Well, if Reagan always urged neutrality, he has been ill-served by his friend. During Virginia's bitterly fought Republican senatorial primary in 1994, Laxalt, a supporter of candidate James C. Miller III, solicited a letter from the failing ex-president in order to scuttle the candidacy of Miller's chief rival, Oliver North. Reagan (or whoever actually did the writing) wrote that he was "pretty steamed about the false statements

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Scrapbook

coming from Oliver North" on the subject of Iran-contra. Laxalt passed the letter on to Sen. John Warner (another Miller ally), who distributed it on the floor of the Senate.

And Laxalt has the gall to attack Forbes for misusing Reagan?

Farrakhan's Money Men, Yet Again

Following the success of the Million Man March in October, Louis Farrakhan announced the formation of a "third political power" in American politics to elect candidates who have "the interests of our people and the poor and the vulnerable of this nation" at heart.

Since then, he has been engaged in the traditional chores of electoral politics like fundraising and political outreach—in untraditional places like Libya, Iraq, and Iran. A few weeks ago, he visited Colonel Moammar Gadhafi, who pledged up to $1 billion. On the heels of his visit to the home of the butchers of Pan Am 103, Farrakhan then paid a call on a government that funds and directs the Islamic terrorist group Hizbollah—you remember them, the ones who massacred 241 U.S. Marine peacekeepers in Beirut in 1983? From there, it was on to Iraq.

In Teheran, Farrakhan actually addressed the Iranian parliament. Some highlights:

"The Islamic Revolution is a perfect example of a government based on the Koran."

"We [Farrakhan] live in the center of corruption and struggle in the heart of the Great Satan. Thus we need your spiritual aid."

"We shall utilize American Muslim unity as a lever of pressure against the United States' arrogant policies."

So Louis Farrakhan has befriended nations that have promoted the terrorism of Abu Abbas, Ahmed Jibril, and Abu Nidal. And the media and politicians (with the honorable exception of the Clinton State Department) who participated in the rehabilitation of Farrakhan in October are unnaturally quiet.

Our Reading List

The Reading List is still on strike, pending your collective advice on whether to keep it or not. (The answer: Next week.) This week, however, let us commend to you a new book, just out in paperback from Vintage Books. *Backward and Upward: The New Conservative Writing* is an anthology edited and with an introduction by our very own David Brooks. It features 41 essays from the likes of Mark Helprin, Christopher Buckley, Paul A. Gigot, James Q. Wilson, William J. Bennett, and Robert Bartley. Readers of The Weekly Standard will find a (suspicious) number of other familiar names in its pages as well: William Kristol, Fred Barnes (twice!), John Podhoretz, P.J. O'Rourke (twice!), David Frum, Andrew Ferguson (twice!), and Charles Krauthammer. You'll laugh, you'll cry, and all for just $13.

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Casual

Marion Barry, In the Snow Again

The thaw has set in here in Washington, D.C., and it looks like we can resume lollygagging through life. We had another snowstorm a couple of weeks back. Well, not a storm exactly—more like seven inches of pretty, powdery snow, barely enough to keep a third-grader in Duluth from skateboarding to school. But it was a big deal in the nation's capital, leading to semi-paralysis.

It was not as big a deal, however, as the Blizzard of Our Times, which struck in mid-January. This was the genuine article, the most severe snowstorm since 1922, when President Harding was endeavoring to give the nation "not nostrums but normalcy," and a teapot of scandal was brewing. Snow, in any amount, affects the District more harshly than it does other places. Washingtonians are amusingly skittish at the slightest drop of precipitation. And the city government! Joke about it if you like, but you can't really know it until you've lived under it—particularly with two feet of snow on the ground.

At first, it was kind of fun. Everyone likes a break from the routine. And there's something satisfying about a tiny dose of hardship. ("Gee, I'd really like to report to work or visit my aunt in Gaithersburg, but I'm forced to sit in my recliner wrapped in a blanket, watching *Sally Jessy*.") Adventure was in the air. Out for a walk on Day One, I encountered a Grizzly Adams-like man with a television camera and a microphone, free-lancing for the local news. "What the heck are you doing out here?" he asked. Being naturally shy, I delivered a five-minute monologue into the camera: "This is nothing compared with my boyhood in Michigan"; "I refuse to permit Nature's furies to confine me to my room"; "Isn't the city tranquil and lovely?"

Neighbor was helping neighbor, and it seemed that civil society was in bloom. I took pleasure in pushing one car after another out of its predicament. Provisions were being purchased for the elderly, and pregnant women were being rushed to hospitals in the Jeeps of strangers. "It brings out the best in us," or so the anchormen told us, repeatedly.

In time, the novelty faded. Patience wore thin and tempers grew short. I began to resent those stuck cars, squealing and smoking. They should never have been taken out in the first place. Their owners were being greedy and selfish, imposing unnecessary burdens on passers-by. We are of course happy to help the distressed; but we also expect people not to be so thoughtless and witless as to place themselves in positions demanding the heroism of a weary cavalry.

The fault, truth to tell, lay with the city's government. It was almost malicious in its incompetence. Streets were unplowed and subway service was drastically curtailed. Unable to drive, people took to the underground—Calcutta-like masses of them—glaring and shoving, snarling and cursing. The social situation was chaotic and tense; for a few days, it seemed on the verge of dangerous.

And Mayor Marion S. Barry: He was on television, speechifying, pacifying, lying. He could boast that, despite everything, the city was still handing out parking tickets left and right. Those who habitually reelect the mayor might have realized that we pay a price for awarding the top job to a convicted cocaine user and self-professed sex addict. Everyone likes a little flair in the mayor's office, sure; but there comes a time when you appreciate a little Robert Taft to go with your Earl Long. (Cracked a colleague of mine, "If anyone should know about 'snow,' it's Marion Barry.") ("Cracked"?)

My street was never plowed. By the city, that is. The exasperated Dutch embassy down the block finally hired a private contractor to do it. (Hey, there's something: I'm bailed out by a foreign socialist government in the face of inaction by my local socialist government.) The mail wasn't delivered for a week, either, giving the lie to that fabled old creed. You needn't have had a portrait of Milton Friedman on your wall to cry out for some privatization.

Can we live in a civil society presided over by a government demonstrably uncivil? As I neared maybe the fifth stuck car of one morning's walk, I thought briefly of turning away, in reproachful disgust. ("Kill the lights and draw the shades, Ma! Dumb Charlie's got his rig stuck in the mud again.") But conscience pricked, and a good thing. The driver was a young, bewildered foreign woman, fearful of my approach. When she saw that I meant to assist, she was touchingly grateful, and the power of Good Samaritanism was affirmed again.

A truism reasserts itself and is relearned: Government in a liberal republic should fulfill its elementary responsibilities: protect citizens from crime; pick up the trash; put out the fires; shovel the snow. A city that will not perform these functions soon returns its inhabitants to that state of nature from which, Hobbes tells us, the race escaped only through the agency of civil society in the first place.

Jay Nordlinger

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food for thought

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Ike's Bad Deal and FDR's Temperament

Alan Ehrenhalt's statement that "[w]hen Eisenhower accepted the nomination, he could plausibly claim that he had promised no one anything and had committed to nothing" is false ("There Are No Conservatives Here," Feb. 12).

In order to get the large California delegation to vote with him on the crucial issue of the contested delegates at the 1952 Republican National Convention, Ike promised his first Supreme Court appointment to California governor Earl Warren. That was a backroom deal of immense and lasting national significance. It gave us a long series of liberal decisions from the activist Warren court.

As fate would have it, the first vacancy was for chief justice. Warren had a tantrum and claimed that, since Ike had promised the "first" vacancy, he was entitled to be chief. Ike later expressed regret over this appointment, but it was too late to remedy the damage.

PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY
WASHINGTON, DC

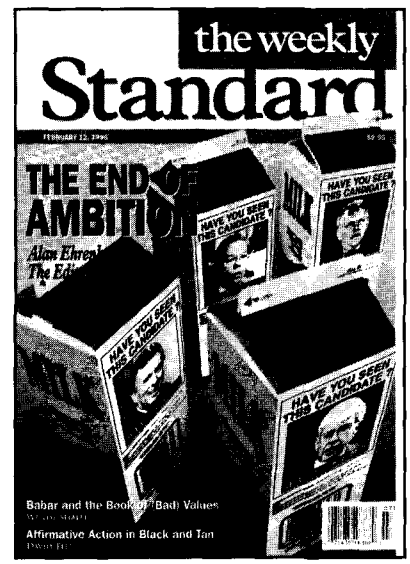
I read Alan Ehrenhalt's article with a great deal of interest, but also with some suspicion. It struck me as self-serving to choose 1952 as the year against which to compare 1996. After all, the same Republican process that chose Eisenhower in 1952 chose Willkie, surely no conservative, in 1940.

By the same token, the Democratic process that chose Stevenson in 1952 chose Roosevelt in 1932. Even leaving aside his legislative record and political ideology, Roosevelt was hardly a temperamental conservative in the way that Stevenson was. If anything, Roosevelt was, it seems to me, a precursor to the sort of candidate Ehrenhalt laments. Yet when Ehrenhalt mentions Roosevelt in passing, he cites him as a positive example. "No nominating system is guaranteed to produce good presidents," he writes. "The process that created Dwight Eisenhower and Franklin Roosevelt also created Warren Harding."

That Ehrenhalt would cite Roosevelt as a positive example and Harding as a negative one raises questions about his use of the word "conservative." Clearly, Roosevelt does not qualify as conservative in any sense, while Harding was both an ideological and temperamental conservative.

In the end, one gets the feeling that all Ehrenhalt means by "conservative" is someone who has met with the approval of liberal historians. How else can his curious inclusion of Roosevelt and his blithe dismissal of Harding be explained?

SHANNON MADER
HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA



Nighthorse's Diversity

In his fine piece about Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell ("Campbell in the Soup," Feb. 12), Matthew Rees repeats a familiar claim about Campbell—that he is the first person of Native American descent to serve as a senator. This is not true. There have been at least two other Native American senators in the 20th century.

Senator Robert L. Owen was a Cherokee from Oklahoma who, in 1913, sought to place all banking in the United States under federal control. The subsequent legislative clash resulted in a compromise measure, the Glass-Owen bill, and the Federal Reserve system.

Second, Sen. Charles Curtis, also from Oklahoma, was an Osage. A reliable conservative, Curtis was placed on the 1928 Republican national ticket, at the insistence of party elders, to keep an eye on the unreliable progressive Herbert Hoover. Sweet are the uses of diversity, as Shakespeare might have said.

PHILIP TERZIAN
OAKTON, VA

Matthew Rees employs some interesting algebra to reach the conclusion that Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell's defection to the Republican party has caused the press to turn on him. His equation is that (a) Sen. Campbell switched parties; (b) his press coverage in the ensuing year has been generally less flattering; therefore (a) must have caused (b). If Rees has anything more than circumstantial evidence for this thesis, he left it out of his article.

Rees correctly notes that my story led Campbell to declare that he would accept questions from me only in writing. But he wrongly asserts that such an arrangement was "unacceptable to Brinkley." As I explained to him, the decision not to comply was made by my managing editor, not by me.

Finally, I did not write "a series of stories focusing on turmoil among former staffers." I wrote *one* story reporting that the senator had fired two aides without cause and pressured a third to resign.

JOHN BRINKLEY
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS
WASHINGTON, DC

MATTHEW REES RESPONDS: In addition to the story mentioned above, Brinkley wrote four others in the month following Campbell's defection. Two stories discussed the resignations of Campbell aides, one was on Campbell's treatment of his aides, and another highlighted staff discontent over the defection.

Dumbing Down America

Robert Weissberg's article "Potemkin Diplomas" (Feb. 12) was both delightful and foreboding.

Delightful because I have been employed in higher education for 15 years and have seen the damage that special courses, administrative "due process," and "bridge courses" have wrought.

Students who were required to do little work and who are praised for the bare minimum of scholarship find

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themselves over their heads in the real world.

The article was foreboding because in education these false supports will be responsible for the final dumbing down of America. Horace Mann will be replaced by the crumbling books of H.G. Wells's Eloi—unfortunately, long before he predicted.

JOHN BURTIS
DERRY, NH

Robert Weissberg over-generalizes in his critique of the value of a university degree. As a doctoral candidate at Louisiana State University, I have come into contact with some instructors who have dispensed undeserved grades, but they have been a minority.

Weissberg claims that "some college writing centers come close to functioning as officially sanctioned ghostwriters." At one I worked in, at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, we had strict policies to ensure that students did their own writing.

This is not to say that academic standards can't be improved; however, Weissberg's doom-and-gloom portrayal of higher education does not do justice to the many administrators and professors who do insist that grades and diplomas be earned fairly.

TONYA STREMLAU JOHNSON
BATON ROUGE, LA

BABAR'S BAD VALUES

Many thanks to Wendy Shalit for her article "Babar, Bennett, and the Book of Values" (Feb. 12). Herbert Kohl and Colin Greer take Babar's "Rich Lady" to task basically for being rich and then recommend a story about a mother too poor to buy her son a decent jacket. The son (predictably) resents this: "I blame my mother for her bad taste and cheap ways." It sounds to me as if the son in that story is "blaming the victim."

Would it be better if the mother stole an acceptable jacket so her son could have "self-esteem"? What is the moral here? It's okay to be rich as long as you're a Democrat?

All of this would be amusing but for the fact that many of these ersatz "values" of the Left make their way into the classroom. Many years later the children indoctrinated in this belief system must unlearn them as the real world intrudes on their utopia. They do this at great cost in time, treasure, emotional pain and (to borrow a now-hackneyed phrase of the Left) self-esteem.

MICHAEL P. GILROY
ALEXANDRIA, VA

The story of Babar the elephant has long been recognized as thinly veiled imperialist dogma; the idea is not original with Herbert Kohl and Colin Greer. The Argentinian writer Ariel Dorfman expounded this long ago in his book *The Empire's Old Clothes: What the Lone Ranger, Babar, and Other Innocent Heroes Do to Our Minds.*

MICHAEL SIERRA
SOMERVILLE, MA

NO PUBLIC MORALIZING

I was impressed that Tucker Carlson insisted on visiting the offices of the Center for Public Integrity rather than doing an interview by phone for his article ("Mr. Lewis's Center for Public Moralizing," Feb. 12). How unfortunate that there was room for only one answer from our 30-minute discussion.

Carlson grudgingly admits that the Center has "been relatively forthcoming" about our funding sources. In fact, we have been fully forthcoming. I answered all of his questions about our financial support and faxed him funding and other information.

Armed with all that information, the article is surprising for its omissions. The truth is that the Center received more money from business than from labor. Labor money accounts for 8 percent of our total income. Business contributions account for slightly more than 8 percent. If you add the 14 percent of earned income that comes from doing business with business, that percentage of our income increases to 22 percent. The remaining 70 percent comes from individual contributors and foundations.

So when Carlson classifies "unions as [Lewis's] major donors," I can only conclude that either your definition of "major" differs from the dictionary's or that your abacus was in the shop.

Carlson's allegation that the Center or Lewis "openly and aggressively defended the president's health care plan" is simply wrong. In the 195-page *Well-Healed: Inside Lobbying for Health Care Reform*, we make very clear that "[t]he Center's aim in this study is not to recommend how health reform should proceed—or if it is needed at all. Our interest is in the decision-making process of government and whether or not it has been distorted in any way."

ALEJANDRO BENES
MANAGING DIRECTOR
CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEGRITY
WASHINGTON, DC

EMPEROR'S PRIMARY COLORS

In his commentary on the political bestseller *Primary Colors*, Christopher Caldwell asks why veterans of the Clinton campaign seem to be applauding rather than denouncing this "potboiler cum-exposé" ("Their True Colors," Feb. 12). I agree with his most likely answer: "Appearance and reality have merged for them, and spin has become a conditioned reflex."

The emperor's-new-clothes metaphor applies perfectly here. The image spun of the good and compassionate Clinton is as marvelous as the cloth woven for the emperor by the so-called weavers in the fairy tale. Of course the spinmasters themselves must now view it this way.

If they didn't cling to the beautifully spun image of Clinton, they would be considered "stupid or unfit for their office," just as are those who could not see the emperor's new clothes.

REGINA RABIN
CHICAGO, IL

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Today's leaders dance to LBJ's tune as America's trust funds boil away.

With all this talk about tax reform and generous deductions for the poor, Congress is not being honest with the American people. The truth is nearly 40 percent of Americans are "exempted" from income tax, despite all the hot air from Washington crying for their protection. This hot air is cause enough for global warning; it certainly prevents honest tax relief. The real burden for this group, no matter the size of their income, is the Social Security payroll tax. No generous deductions here. Neither raising income taxes on the rich nor moving to a flat tax will do anything to provide *payroll* tax relief for the working poor.

LBJ still calls the tune.

To hide the cost of the Viet Nam war, LBJ pooled all our independent trust funds into one giant pot. Because a stew obscures its exact ingredients, this *budget* stew became the *tax-raising* tool of choice for government, without ever using those dirty words. Over the past 10 years, payroll tax rates are up by more than 50 percent with revenues more than doubled, yet the trust funds are on the verge of bankruptcy again. Recent government shutdowns illustrate how the treasury can take money from one "trust" fund and transfer it to another with impunity. Such activity would be criminal in the corporate world, but not in Washington.

Trust fund reform is the right wine for a tax reform entrée.

Let's face it. If you are under 55, you have a greater chance of being abducted by aliens than ever seeing your first Social Security check, under today's terms and conditions. As long as all the trust funds can be commingled at will, for political purposes, our future will not have the comfort our parents enjoy. All that awaits our children are historical footnotes of the foolish plan for a Great Society. Trust fund reform and tax reform are solutions that go hand-in-hand. Neither will succeed without the other.

The Social Security Ponzi scheme must stop now.

Our politicians are still dancing to LBJ's tune. Few have the guts to risk their career today for the future of our children. All trust funds must be taken off budget and the funds invested for real growth and savings as they are in other nations. As long as everything remains in one pot, payroll taxes will continue to rise to reduce the appearance of the deficit. We have laws against Ponzi schemes in the private sector. Maybe it's time the same laws are applied to our politicians.

For more information on the Princeton Proposal, contact:

Princeton Economic Institute
214 Carnegie Center, Suite 303
Princeton, New Jersey 08540-6237
Tel: 609-987-9522
Fax: 609-987-0726

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the weekly Standard

Republicans and Immigration

The United States has a fantastically complicated system of immigration law. It provides for more new residents each year than occur in all the rest of the world's nations combined. America also has sizable *illegal* immigration, which creates serious practical problems for those few states in which it is most heavily concentrated. Agreed? Good.

Now, then. Republican-sponsored omnibus immigration legislation is quickly wending its way through Congress. The Judiciary Committee will take up the Senate's version beginning February 29. House floor debate on an almost identical bill is scheduled for mid-March. If these measures are eventually approved in their present form, congressional Republicans will have produced the most sweeping overhaul of American immigration policy in 30 years—and the sharpest immigration crackdown and restriction since the 1920s.

ASK YOURSELF A SIMPLE QUESTION: WILL PASSING THIS IMMIGRATION BILL HELP THE REPUBLICAN PARTY? IF YOUR ANSWER IS YES, THINK AGAIN.

Forget for a moment all the furious academic debates about whether existing levels of immigration are culturally and economically "good" or "bad." Those debates all too often dump issues of legal and illegal immigration together (as the House and Senate measures do) into what is, for non-experts at least, an indigestible and clarity-destroying porridge. Forget also, if you can, the mesmerizing intensity of Pat Buchanan's anti-immigration pitch—and the feeble response it has earned from his competitors—in the current Republican presidential primary campaign.

Ask yourself, instead, a simple, political question: Will passing this immigration legislation help the Republican party? If your instinctive answer is yes, think again.

Consider the legislation's most notable feature targeted at illegal immigration. Jobs, more than anything else, are what draws illegals to America. We now have a system of sanctions against employers who hire illegals. It is a universally acknowledged failure. So it's proposed that we give teeth to these sanctions by the addition of "automated employment eligibility verification." Shortly after any American takes a new job, his company will check his name and Social Security number against a federal list drawn from databases at the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Social Security Administration. Initial discrepancies must be cleared up in 10 days.

Supporters of this plan offer bland assurances that it will first be carefully pilot tested in five (gigantic) states, and will ultimately inconvenience no one whose legal status is secure. But internal Social Security Administration documents contain long-term forecasts that verification will fail 5 percent of the time. That's 3,250,000 glitches each year—or, to put it indelicately, roughly 600 per congressional district each month. Can average citizens resolve such problems in 10 days, long-distance, with a Washington bureaucracy?

And what happens if they don't? Here's Republican Lamar Smith of Texas, lead House sponsor of the bill: "In that situation, the individual has had his day in court. If he cannot prove that he has a Social Security number and the name and number don't match, then he should not be employed." Oh.

To ensure that Social Security numbers used in this system are not obtained fraudulently, the Senate bill mandates that state-issued "breeder documents" required for Social Security processing—birth certificates and driver's licenses, for example—be embedded with "a fingerprint or other biometric data." The "biometric" business is code for the new science of counterfeit-proof identification: Retina scans (eyeball prints, if you will) are the most commonly cited procedure. It doesn't take a fevered libertarian to worry over this development. And the entire scheme raises ques-

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tions of simple justice. Every American's next job will now be made contingent on the perfect functioning of a government computer system ostensibly designed only to root out illegal employment.

A bad idea. And, it must be said, pretty much the only controversial idea among the legislation's many provisions to control illegal immigration: restrictions on public benefits for illegals, expedited exclusion and deportation mechanisms, beefed-up border security, and expanded investigations of criminal aliens and people who overstay their visas. Everyone opposes illegal immigration. These are popular initiatives. And their popularity is one big reason why their sponsors want them in this omnibus legislation in the first place. The *illegal* immigration crackdown serves as cover for a series of *legal* immigration proposals that would be far more controversial if they were voted on separately.

THE CRACKDOWN ON ILLEGALS SERVES AS COVER FOR LIMITING *LEGAL* IMMIGRATION IN WAYS THAT WOULD BE CONTROVERSIAL IF VOTED ON ALONE.

Legal immigration to the United States is now limited, for the most part, to relatives of American citizens or other legal permanent residents, to employees sponsored by American businesses, and to refugees. Most of these categories have elaborate and interrelated numerical ceilings and floors, which change each year according to overall demand and other factors. The category of highest preference goes to spouses, parents, and minor children of U.S. citizens; they are admitted to this country without limit and without delay. There are also five lower categories of family-based immigrants. All of these latter categories have numerical quotas. And all of them have waiting lists, in some cases many years long.

Parents of U.S. citizens would no longer be freely admitted under either the House or Senate bill. The bills are slightly different here, but both would require immigrant parents to have Medicare- and Medicaid-quality health and long-term-care insurance before they come over. Such insurance does not exist. Neither would this class of immigration.

Two "unmarried adult children" categories are abolished in the Senate measure. The House version would allow a very small number of annual immigrants from both categories, provided they were between 21 and 25 years old and were already claimed as dependents on their parents' tax returns—which, as it happens, restricts this category to people from Canada or Mexico. Both bills would also eliminate the current categories for married adult children and siblings of U.S. citizens.

All told, there are now almost 2.5 million people on waiting lists in the family immigration categories these bills would kill. All of them have already-approved visa applications. They have paid their fees and queued up—sometimes for a decade or more. The vast majority of them are related to full U.S. citizens, people who can *vote*. And almost none of them, if this legislation becomes law, will ever settle in the States.

Why? Proponents of this "reform" use a clever argument to thwart their critics. The one non-citizen family category that would survive in the new system—spouses and minor children of legal permanent residents—is vastly oversubscribed, with a waiting list more than a million names long. It is inhumane, the legislation's advocates say, to keep the nuclear families of a million "moms and dads and little kids" separated like this. We need to get them in. And it is unfair to admit more-distant relatives in any other immigration category until we do.

Maybe so. But it's not as unfair as it might first appear. Eighty percent of the people now "languishing" on this particular waiting list are relatives of once-illegal aliens amnestied by the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act. More than 400,000 of them are already living with their families in the United States. And *all* their amnestied relatives are now eligible for naturalization, which would win them immediate and permanent visas. Even allowing for delays in naturalization, a small number of additional visas each year would quickly erase this entire waiting list. And all without busting the bank of overall legal immigration, which has lately declined precipitously—by itself, under current law—from 1.8 million in 1991 to under 800,000 last year.

Why, then, must we *permanently* bar from our shores so many relatives of U.S. citizens in order to solve a relatively small, *temporary* problem involving the relatives of former illegal aliens? Because, truth be told, proponents of this pending legislation think America now has "too much" legal immigration. And killing most current family-preference categories would significantly reduce overall future immigration numbers—as would the legislation's questionable new restrictions and regulations on employment-based and refugee admissions.

It's a point of view. It happens to be a point of view this magazine does not share. Current U.S. immigration rates are modest by historical standards. And for the most part, if the issue isn't maliciously confused with the problem of *illegal* aliens, we're managing that immigration quite well—and to good effect.

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Be that as it may. Back to raw politics for a moment. Asians and Hispanics have increasingly Republican partisan inclinations. Three-fourths of all current immigrants come from Asia and Latin America. An equal proportion of them arrive and stay in some of the biggest electoral-college states. In other words, the legislation now before Congress would infuriate a lot of important voters by wiping their families off existing waiting lists. And it might not make the rest of us too happy, either—what with those dicey job verifications, fingerprint requirements, and all.

This should be a no-brainer for most congressional Republicans. Critics of this legislation will shortly move to split the bill into discrete "legal" and "illegal" halves. They want to drop the employment verification system from the illegal side and pass what's left. They want to *defeat* the major legal immigration provisions outright. In its narrow self-interest, at very least, the GOP should pray they succeed.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Social Issues Strike Back

by David Brooks

Ralph Reed is a man with a strategy. For the past few years, the executive director of the Christian Coalition has been trying to integrate religious conservatives into the Republican mainstream. That way Christian conservatives wouldn't just wield influence on one or two issues, like abortion and gay rights. They would have a place at the table. They would influence tax policies, fiscal policies, welfare reform. Reed has therefore been friendly to the most mainstream presidential candidate, Bob Dole.

We now know for sure that religious conservatives are not easy to command, as the *Washington Post* once notoriously claimed. In the Iowa caucuses, religious voters defied Reed's mainstream approach. They did *not* back Bob Dole in large numbers. They went for candidates defiantly outside the GOP mainstream, Pat Buchanan and Alan Keyes, and thus signalled they will not be easily digested by the Republican party. It is proving very difficult to build a social agenda that appeals both to religious conservatives and to more secular conservatives.

Neil Shigley

Ralph Reed

The key explication of the Reed strategy came in an essay he wrote for the Summer 1993 issue of *Policy Review* called "Casting a Wider Net: Religious Conservatives Move Beyond Abortion and Homosexuality." Reed argued that the "most urgent challenge for pro-family conservatives is to develop a broader issues agenda." He constructed such an agenda, in which abortion was thrown in with tax relief, welfare, and spending cuts—standard Republican fare. Accordingly, the Christian Coalition's contribution to the Contract with America was the $500-per-child tax credit. That is, of course, a fiscal measure, a pocketbook play, not a social issue traditionally understood.

On the day of the Iowa caucus, Reed gave a speech in Los Angeles reiterating his desire to take religious conservatives mainstream. He emphasized, as always, that religious conservatives cannot be delivered as a bloc. They share regular American concerns, with a pro-family twist. "Unlike special interests that have come to dominate the national Democratic party in recent years," he said, "we will impose no litmus tests, issue no demands, and dictate no terms as a condition of our support." Religious conservatives, Reed emphasized, would probably look for candidates who are broadly socially conservative, who prize religion, who will be role models; who have a consistent record on abortion, school choice, tax relief, and budget balancing.

But the large Buchanan and Keyes vote, along with polling data, suggest that many religious conservatives are not looking for candidates who are simply good family men or morally upright. Rather, these voters

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are looking for a candidate who will be explicit on abortion and homosexuality. The Iowa voting patterns suggested that many religious conservatives don't want to stick abortion in with a range of other issues. If you think abortion is murder, it hardly belongs on the same list with the family tax credit. For religious conservatives, abortion tends to bleach out all other issues. Moreover, as the Family Research Council's Gary Bauer stresses, recent Republican history, in which pro-life forces have heard brave talk but seen relatively little action, has caused this harder-line camp to raise the bar for candidates who seek their support. Explicitness is all.

Reed is not hostile to Buchanan. He'd like to see Buchanan do well enough to keep Dole attentive to the social issues. But Reed has spent three years trying to create Republican religious conservatives, when in fact many would rather be religious conservatives who happen to vote Republican. They refuse to be smoothly assimilated.

VOTING PATTERNS IN IOWA SUGGEST MANY RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES DON'T WANT TO STICK ABORTION IN WITH A RANGE OF OTHER ISSUES.

After Pat Buchanan's speech at the 1992 GOP convention, other conservatives tried to fuse the concerns of religious conservatives with those of more secular conservatives. These people—ranging from Lamar Alexander to Newt Gingrich—respect religious conservatives. They support the idea of greater religious presence in the public square. They are pro-life. But they also believe that living in a liberal democracy means that moral issues must be addressed within a secular, natural-law tradition.

For example, Adam Meyerson, the editor of *Policy Review*, champions civil society, the effort to use voluntary religious and civic organizations to rebuild community bonds. The civil-society approach is a secular political agenda that deploys religious institutions in, among other things, the war on poverty. Meyerson fears that the Buchanan message of economic populism may pull religious voters away from free-market conservatism. A central goal of the civil-society effort, he says, is to keep those people in the broad conservative coalition. Legislation in the civil-society mold does not champion specific religious values. Sen. Dan Coats of Indiana proposes a tax credit for all donations to religious and charitable institutions that address poverty. Tax-free donations could go to organizations that are Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or New Age.

Another coalition-building device is the Parental Rights Amendment, championed by Betsy DeVos and Jeffrey Bell. The amendment would be attached to state constitutions and would read, "The right of parents to direct the upbringing and education of their children shall not be infringed." The language is devised to take power away from such social engineers as school administrators and give it back to parents. Again, it is secular, but the effect would be to strengthen the hand of religious groups who sue school districts to prevent, say, the distribution of condoms.

These and other secular efforts may or may not be good governing agendas, but the evidence so far is that they do not generate political passion. Lamar Alexander is the presidential candidate who has most enthusiastically embraced the civil-society message. He can use the social issues to round out his image. But there doesn't seem to be enough oomph there to drive a successful campaign.

All this represents a party-wide struggle to replicate the Reagan approach to social issues. Reagan could talk about moral absolutes in a way that was secular. He built a social agenda that appealed to a majority of Americans, not just to those who are explicitly Christian in their politics. But that was during the Cold War, when a president could demonstrate his moral bona fides by standing firm against the Evil Empire. Now foreign affairs does not loom as a moral battleground; nationalism is traditionally a passionate issue for conservatives, but it is hard to play that card these days.

Moreover, this is an era in which Republicans have actual power in Congress and must concern themselves with issues of governance. When the party was in opposition, it could talk about abortion day and night. Now it has the ability to do something about it, and that has caused a strategic chasm to open up on the Right. Some Republicans would like to throw the Hail Mary pass on social issues by going for a constitutional amendment. Others adopt the west-coast offense and look for a series of eight-yard completions, like banning partial-birth abortions. The problem for the incrementalists is that going deep gets people excited. Going gradual does not.

At the moment, Republicans seem to have looped back to the summer of 1992. Last year, Republicans and conservatives were united in their efforts to pass the Contract with America. During the two previous years, they were united by their opposition to Clintonian liberalism. But now the Contract is dormant, and Clinton is a self-professed budget balancer. Pat Buchanan is on the march once again. Republicans are fractious, and coalition-building seems an increasingly thankless job. ♦

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STATE FARM WAS THERE

by Tod Lindberg

THE REACTION TO NEWS that Bill Clinton's lawyers had just received a check for $891,000 from an insurance company to pay the president's defense bills in the sexual harassment suit brought against him by Paula Corbin Jones was entirely typical. It was party time on talk radio—hosts and callers whooping it up about the studly ne'er-do-well and his "bimbo insurance." In the establishment press, meanwhile, the story was something of a yawn within 24 hours of the *Wall Street Journal*'s breaking it, as if million-dollar payouts (the tab is still running) to sitting presidents weren't worth a second thought.

In the era of Clintonian exceptionalism, this was yet another first. The first president to claim he is temporarily immune from civil suits for personal conduct; the first president to set up a legal defense fund; the first president whose wife is hauled off to the grand jury; and now, the first president collecting on umbrella coverage for personal liability.

IN THE ERA OF CLINTONIAN EXCEPTIONALISM, THIS WAS ANOTHER FIRST—THE FIRST PRESIDENT COLLECTING ON HIS LIABILITY COVERAGE.

The Clintons have had this coverage going back at least to 1988—contrary to misinformation suggesting he took out sexual harassment insurance in February 1991 with an eye toward putting the moves on Paula Jones in a hotel room that May. Initially, the policy was with the Chubb Group; the Clintons switched to State Farm in 1992, but the coverage was continuous.

This sort of insurance is not unusual, but neither is it well known. It mainly serves as a supplement to homeowner's and auto insurance, but it also provides protection against all kinds of civil suits involving allegations of personal injury—such as Paula Jones's. The Clintons' policy is for $1 million—which is just the limit on the damages the company will pay as a result of a trial or settlement. These policies also oblige the insurance company to defend you if someone sues you. The $891,000 Clinton received was for defense costs. And considering that this case hasn't even reached depositions yet—as the president's superlawyer, Robert Bennett, presses his novel legal claims up the food chain to the Supreme Court, if need be—the insurance company is on the hook (and the president is off the hook) for a lot more.

All for about $120 a year in premiums.

If this sounds like a pretty good deal to you, you're not alone. In fact, I barely got Bob Bennett talking on the phone before he asked if I had an umbrella liability policy, because I really ought to. "I recommend that people get them, and a lot of people do," he says.

Well, he would. He does command $475 an hour, and the Chubb Group's payout means he'll be getting his money far faster than he had any reason to expect. But this raises an interesting question.

Suppose you're not the president of the United States—just, say, a nobody writer. Suppose somebody resurrects some best-forgotten incident involving a hotel room many years ago (albeit without state troopers). Suppose you don't remember it and anyway it never happened—that's your story and you're sticking to it. If you've got this policy, does that mean you get to hire Bennett and deploy the full resources of his firm, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher, and Flom, to defend yourself?

Don't count on it. In fact, as with everything Clintonian, this story has complications. And unsurprisingly, they involve dusty files, memory lapses, and sudden, almost providential discoveries.

The Clintons, it seems, forgot all about the existence of this policy. It was only discovered after a complete review of all the First Couple's old, expired insurance policies undertaken by an insurance-man associate from the good old days. So while Jones filed suit in May 1994, it wasn't until April 28, 1995, that Bennett wrote the company seeking payment on the claim. By this time, the million-dollar defense was, of course, well underway.

Bennett won't release copies of the Clinton policies. The standard State Farm policy, however, includes a provision telling the insured to "notify . . . us right away" or else coverage "may not" be provided. Hence the potential importance of the Clintons' claim to be unaware of the policy's existence. "The insurance company had no choice but to honor their duty to defend—whether it was Joe Blow or the president of the United States," says Bennett. But there is defense, and then there's superdefense. If you happen to notify your insurer up front, chances are good your insurer is going to try to lay down the law on what kind and cost of defense it will provide you. Bennett, in effect, presented the company with a *fait accompli*. He and his team had long been working on the case. If the insurance company tried to deny the claim or yank the legal team in favor of something less extravagant, the company would incur the wrath of the president of the

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Voting by mail also increases voter participation—it broke all records in Oregon. It gives voters plenty of time to make a decision. It eliminates waiting in line to vote, and the problems that keep people away from the polling place, such as bad weather, age or physical handicaps. Voter participation has topped 90% in some contests.

Such results are gratifying to us at the U.S. Postal Service. If voting by mail works in Oregon, why not in other states, or even nationwide? We're glad people trust us to deliver their vote, and like the idea of bringing the ballot box and the voter closer together.

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United States and, worse perhaps, of his lawyer.

Imagine you're the insurance company. What do you do? You pay, obviously.

As one State Farm agent notes, disputes about the "duty to defend" are commonplace: "Somebody with the right attorney might be able to win that argument. Somebody without the right attorney might not."

Bennett says the insurance company took a hard line on the president's claim. Ultimately, it turned down about $150,000 of the bill, arguing that the duty to defend doesn't include talking to the press, among other things Bennett bills Clinton for. Bennett says: "Because of the high-profile nature of the insured, all the i's were dotted and t's were crossed."

No doubt. But when you sit down to work things out with the insurance company, it's good (as Mel Brooks put it) to be the king—and to have the president as your client. ♦

THE THRILL GAP

by Fred Barnes

THERE'S A THRILL GAP IN THE REPUBLICAN presidential race. Bob Dole and Lamar Alexander attract plenty of press but not many voters excited to see and hear them. Dole took no chances on the day of the Iowa caucuses. He spoke to captive audiences at two insurance companies. Still, the crowds sat on their hands during Dole's speeches. The day before, Dole had brought young people in from Kansas and Ohio to pad his crowds. Alexander spoke to a modest crowd in Des Moines on the eve of the caucuses, stirring it more with his piano playing than his message. A University of Iowa professor, Arthur Miller, tracked expected caucus participants and found many were too unmotivated to vote. This was especially true among those inclined to support Dole. Small wonder, then, that fewer than 20 percent of registered Republicans bothered to vote, a turnout far short of expectations and even below the turnout in 1988.

NEGATIVE ADS ONLY PARTLY EXPLAIN LOW TURNOUT FOR THE IOWA CAUCUSES. MORE SIGNIFICANT, THE LEADING CONTENDERS HAVE LITTLE TO SAY.

The conventional explanation is that negative advertising, particularly by Steve Forbes, turned people off. And attack ads may indeed have played a small part. But the larger reason for voter apathy is that Dole and Alexander, the candidates with the best chance of winning the GOP nomination, have almost nothing compelling to say. Dole's standard speech is largely biographical, focusing on the notion that as a World War II vet he has "one last mission"—to capture the White House. Alexander emphasizes process over substance. His opening statement in the TV debate in New Hampshire on February 15 jabbed at Dole for airing negative TV spots. In his opener, Dole boasted he'd kept the New Hampshire primary "first in the nation," then blamed Alexander for going negative first. Great, but my question is: Where's the beef?

You'd think Dole and Alexander would notice the enthusiastic crowds Pat Buchanan and Alan Keyes attract and ask why. The answer is Buchanan and Keyes say something. They diagnose America's problems and offer solutions. This has put Buchanan in real contention for the nomination. But getting Dole and Alexander to play up substance is almost impossible. True, they had to deal with significant issues in the New Hampshire debate. The moderators forced them to. So Dole argued about trade with Buchanan. And Alexander succinctly outlined his plans for reforming Social Security and stemming illegal immigration. But left to their own devices, Dole and Alexander veer to the trivial.

Dole's advisers aren't to blame. They've lobbied for months for him to talk more substantively. Vin Weber, the campaign co-chairman, believes a strong stump message could be developed by combining segments from serious speeches Dole gave in recent years. Robert Lighthizer, a Washington attorney and former Dole aide in the Senate, has pressed Dole to focus on wage stagnation and the loss of manufacturing jobs—in other words, the middle-class squeeze. Campaign manager Scott Reed has asked outside advisers to suggest a broader Dole strategy.

One of them, David Smick, an ex-aide to Jack Kemp, backed Lighthizer's approach, contending the country has been divided into "two Americas" under President Clinton, investors who've done fabulously well and wage earners whose take-home pay has declined. By attacking Clinton on the economy, Lighthizer and Smick think, Dole can revive the role he played in 1993 and 1994 as the chief Republican

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point man in the substantive fight against the president.

But Dole has resisted this advice. "He's uncomfortable waging the campaign on substance," says a Dole strategist. "He hates it when people talk about the vision thing. He thinks it's faddish." After his embarrassingly narrow victory in Iowa, however, Dole relented. In New Hampshire, he spoke on a different issue each day, but just barely. His speech to the New Hampshire legislature on February 13 contained only one paragraph on declining wages. And his foreign policy speech the next day, an impressive putdown of isolationism, was drowned out by his negative ads on Buchanan. Weber and others insisted the ads would be counterproductive, but Dole Senate aide Sheila Burke, pollster Bill McInturff, and deputy campaign manager Bill Lacy prevailed.

Like Dole, Alexander has plenty of substantive beef, most of it hidden. Instead, he emphasizes process (term limits, killing the Department of Education) and gimmicks. His latest is a pair of knee-high boots he brings out to show his supposed distaste for negative campaigning. This tactic, proposed by Alexander's clever strategist, Mike Murphy, may have aided him in Iowa, and it may help in New Hampshire. But it also distracts Alexander from saying much that matters. And it's hypocritical. Alexander has done plenty of attacking himself. Then there's the plaid shirt and the acronym ABC, "Alexander beats Clinton." He does? Says who? The constant repetition of ABC is annoying.

As a self-styled outsider, Alexander has an additional burden: He must prove he's a serious player, not just an ambitious jobseeker. Buchanan has managed this by talking specifically (and endlessly) about the two overriding issues of the campaign, the economy and the nation's moral ills. Alexander can do the same merely by playing up positions he's already taken. Some of them are surprisingly bold, like his plan to turn over to "charity banks" at the local level the $50 billion Washington spends annually on welfare. This is radical devolution. By emphasizing it and other fresh ideas, Alexander may also prove he's really the conservative he claims to be and not the moderate he was in the not-so-distant past. He might even thrill someone. ♦

Of Masses and Morons

by Robert Maranto

Every now and then, the *Washington Post* runs a series that plucks at the strings of Beltway hearts. Inevitably, these series distill the collective wisdom of the capital's political elites—sometimes right, sometimes wrong, sometimes an instructive mixture.

The most recent example was a front-page six-parter concerning the public's alleged ignorance of and cynicism about politics. It employed surveys, focus groups, and experts in an exploration of contemporary political alienation. In some respects, the series was competent and informative. But it erred in overstating the extent and meaning of public ignorance, and did so in ways that flatter students of the masses-as-morons school of political analysis.

THAT THE PUBLIC WOULD HAVE TROUBLE PASSING A CIVICS TEST IS A DOG-BITES-MAN STORY, AND NO CAUSE FOR DESPAIR ABOUT DEMOCRACY.

The American public would have difficulty passing a civics test, yes—this is strictly dog bites man. As the *Post* reported, only a quarter of Americans can name their two U.S. senators. Barely half can name the speaker of the House, and only a third can name their congressman. Is this cause for despair over American democracy? Probably not, for three main reasons.

First, survey questions are poorly designed if they ask people to name politicians by their official titles. Relatively few Americans can do this. But large majorities can pick the right name off a list—a task more akin to the actual act of voting. People may not be quick to blurt out Newt Gingrich's exact title, but they likely know something about where he stands and the role he plays. After all, if no one has heard of Gingrich, how can he be widely unpopular? Surveys endeavoring to test the citizenry's knowledge must not be animated by a spirit of "gotcha."

Second, the *Post*'s surveys were conducted from November 1995 to January 1996, nearly a year before the general election. Unless some national crisis is looming, normal, sensible people simply do not focus on politics at such a time—nor should they have to.

Last, the series missed a critical point: The elec-

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torate is not the same as the public. Those surveyed were random adults, not likely voters. In most presidential elections, just over half of adult citizens turn out to vote; in non-presidential elections, the percentage is lower still. Some nonvoters are truly without a clue about politics and probably will remain so for life. Other nonvoters are young people who as yet have few responsibilities. (When they buy property and have children in school, their interest in politics will increase.) Others are ineligible. Still others stay home on election day because pollsters have already declared the winners. Politicians hoping to attain office by capitalizing on public ignorance should realize this about opinion polls: Voters know more about politics than nonvoters.

The contention here is not that ignorance of politics poses no problem. Americans themselves believe that they need to do more to keep up with the political world if the government is to work better. It would be nice if more people recognized that, to balance the budget, we have to come to grips with entitlements, not just discard a few bureaucrats, cut congressional pay, and end fancy lunches for Boutros Boutros-Ghali (though admittedly these aren't bad ideas).

But to argue that Americans must be experts on the most complex political issues suggests an acceptance of direct democracy not in accord with the Constitution or with American traditions. Traditionally, leaders decide policy, subject to periodic judgments at the ballot box. It is only when politicians act from daily polling that it is vital for the public to be exceptionally well informed. And if we do things that way, why have elected leaders at all?

In this vein, political scientist John Geer has suggested that opinion polling has made political realignments more difficult than ever. Currently, candidates and whole parties can simply switch positions (or lie about them) with the fluctuations of the polls. In the past, politicians couldn't know what voters thought before an election took place. They had to guess; often they were defeated as a result. Compare today's creeping 30-year Republican realignment with upheavals like the Civil War and the New Deal.

Political elites quite naturally favor the masses-as-morons paradigm: It serves as self-justifying protection against term limits, tax simplification, and other populist reforms. "If only the public understood how hard we work and how important we are to their lives," goes the thinking, "they surely wouldn't begrudge us our pay, our perks, our power." Masses-as-morons validates the kind of poll worship and hyper-pragmatism that separates politics from governing.

So we may be forgiven for asking, Just who are the real cynics here?

Robert Maranto teaches government at Lafayette College and is the author of **Politics and Bureaucracy in the Modern Presidency.**

Yes, Justice Was Done in Peru

by Mark Falcoff

On November 30, Peruvian national police squadrons converged on a villa in the suburbs of Lima after they were told it might be a safe house for the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru—one of the two terrorist organizations that have plagued the country for the past dozen years. The occupants engaged the police in a 12-hour shootout. When the authorities finally gained the upper hand and were able to enter the building, they found an arsenal of weapons and uniforms, as well as 8,000 rounds of ammunition and 3,000 sticks of dynamite. Twenty-odd Tupac Amaru militants were taken into custody, including its second in command—and a 26-year-old New Yorker by the name of Lori Berenson, who was subsequently brought to trial by a military court and sentenced to life imprisonment.

SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT IN PERU, LORI BERENSON HAS BECOME A CAUSE CELEBRE IN THE U.S.

Since then she has become something of a *cause célèbre* in America. The *New York Times* has taken up the Berenson case with special passion, since her parents are both residents of Gramercy Park, teachers at local colleges, and by all accounts exemplary citizens.

What is the case against Lori Berenson? She was working in Peru with journalist's credentials, which she obtained with false documentation. She had rented both the villa and an apartment for the use of the Tupac Amaru guerrillas. According to the Peruvian authorities, the building where she was apprehended was being used as a base from which to launch an

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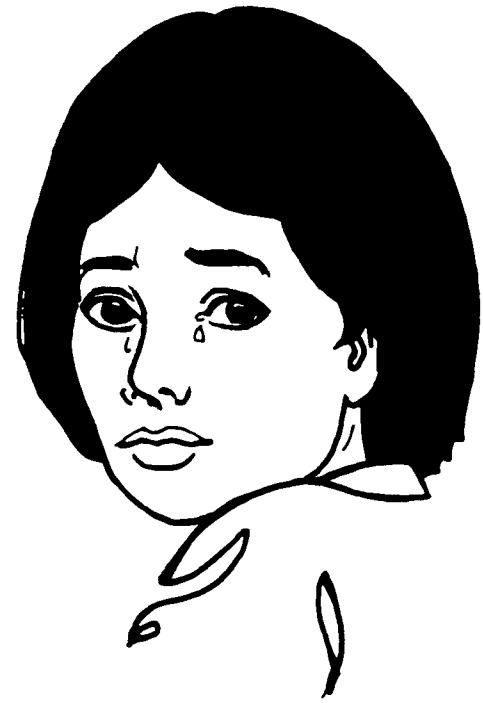
Papal Catholics: Don't Mourn!



After Vatican II the number of converts to Catholicism slowed to a trickle. But now that the papacy has regained its bearings and confidence, the Church has attracted a new wave of converts, including highly literate people like Malcolm Muggeridge, Richard John Neuhaus, and Lewis Lehrman.

What infuriates the neo-Modernists in the Church is that the new converts are being drawn by the Magisterium, the papacy, the Catholicism of the ages — all those things the dissenters want to dilute or dismember.

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The forum for the new generation of converts is the NEW OXFORD REVIEW, a monthly magazine which takes its name from the 19th-century Oxford Movement in England, and its inspiration from John Henry Newman. Among the converts who've written for the REVIEW are Walker Percy, Sheldon Vanauken, L. Brent Bozell, Avery Dulles, Ronda Chervin, Peter Kreeft, Thomas Howard, Paul Vitz, Russell Kirk.

According to Boston's Cardinal Law, "What is fascinating about the *New Oxford Review* is that it is a sign of contradiction": At a time when decadent Western culture has invaded the Church, and well-publicized quisling Catholics are openly defiant of Church teaching, here is a countertendency celebrating the fullness of the Truth. Yes, as *Newsweek* says, we're "cheeky." What's more, we're "influential," to quote the *Los Angeles Times*.

But don't get us wrong: We're not just for converts. We're not out to repeal Vatican II. We welcome Protestant writers, solid "mere Christians" of the C.S. Lewis variety. We don't equate Catholicism with Americanism or Western civilization. We're for Catholics with catholic tastes and inquiring minds.

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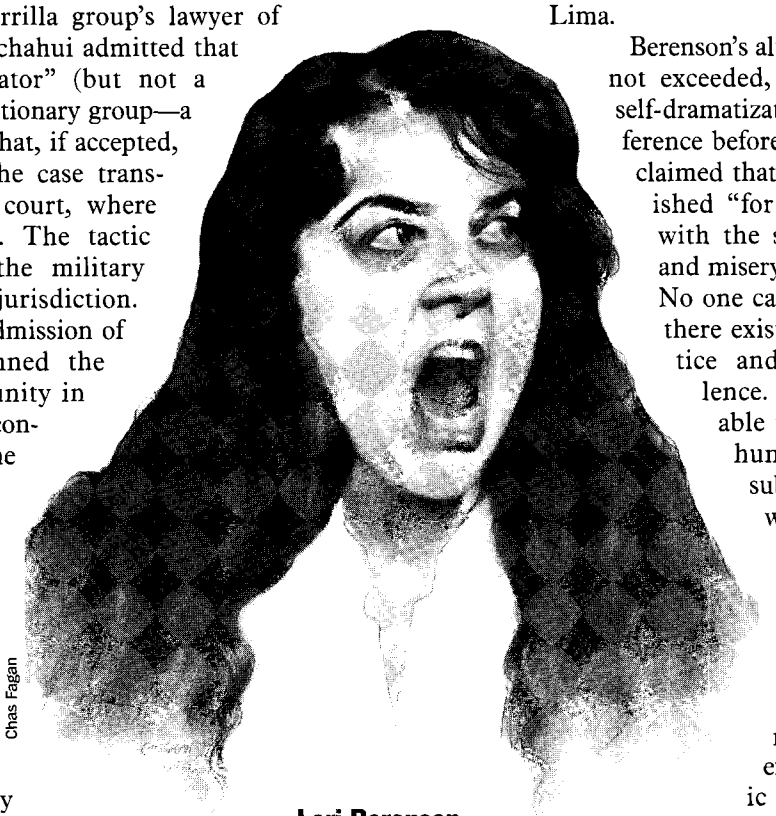
attack on the Peruvian congress, with a view to taking various members hostage in order to exchange them for guerrillas currently in custody. Among other documents discovered at the time of her arrest were a chart of the seating arrangements in the congress building and a detailed escape plan for the house in the event of a raid. Both appear to be in Berenson's handwriting.

Berenson does not deny that she was a member of the guerrilla group, but insists that the group is nonviolent and that the building where she was captured was a school. She was defended at her trial by Grimaldo Achahui, the guerrilla group's lawyer of choice. At her trial Achahui admitted that she was a "collaborator" (but not a "leader") of the revolutionary group—a legalistic distinction that, if accepted, would have gotten the case transferred to a civilian court, where penalties are lighter. The tactic failed to convince the military judges to remand jurisdiction. Indeed, the oblique admission of guilt it offered stunned the human-rights community in Peru, which has been conspicuously absent in the campaign to free the accused.

For its part, the Peruvian press in recent weeks has been wondering out loud whether there are two laws for terrorists—an implacable one for swarthy foreigners who ply their trade at places like the World Trade Center in New York, and a second, infinitely forgiving one for Americans on a revolutionary lark in strange, distant countries.



Chas Fagan

Lori Berenson

Lori Berenson appears to be another one of those Generation Xers suffering from what Joseph Epstein calls "sixties envy." According to a lugubrious portrait sketched by Carey Goldberg in the *New York Times*, from early adolescence she displayed a "serious streak of altruism," serving food in soup kitchens and seeking "responsible summer jobs [instead of going to] frivolous summer camps." During her student years at MIT she became interested in Central America through an anthropology course and went there for the first time in 1988 on a trip sponsored by the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador. Upon her return she went on to work for human-rights groups in Boston, New York, and Washington. She moved to Nicaragua in 1989 to bask in the final moments of the Sandinista revolution. When the Sandinistas were ejected from office by popular vote the following year, she moved to El Salvador, where she met, married, and divorced a Salvadoran. The next step of her quest took her briefly to Panama, then to Ecuador (where she is supposed to have met the leader of the Tupac Amaru guerrillas), and finally to Lima.

Berenson's altruism is matched, if not exceeded, by a penchant for self-dramatization. At a press conference before her sentencing she claimed that she was being punished "for concerning myself with the situation of hunger and misery in this country. . . . No one can deny that in Peru there exists great social injustice and institutional violence. . . . It's not acceptable that children die of hunger because of the subhuman situation in which they live."

She is right about the hunger and misery: Peru is one of the poorer countries in Latin America, though in recent years it has experienced a dramatic upturn in its social and economic indicators. How well or poorly Peru is doing to meet the needs of its citizens remains, of course, a matter of opinion, and Berenson is certainly entitled to hers. But let the record show that she is charged not for her views but for her involvement with a terrorist group that, in recent years, has been involved in assassinations, bombings, kidnappings, robberies, and attacks against innocent people, many of them poor.

Berenson's defenders have chosen to sidestep altogether the issue of her guilt or innocence, as well they might, given the evidence. What, after all, is the likelihood that a young woman fully fluent in Spanish, well-traveled, and politically sophisticated, would remain totally ignorant of the history of the Tupac Amaru guerrillas? That she would be sufficiently trusted by their leaders to be permitted to rent real

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estate on their behalf without being something more than an occasional sympathizer? That she could live for weeks in the same building with its second-in-command and an arsenal of guns, uniforms, ammunition, and dynamite and imagine that it was, in her words, a "school for political thinking"? That her sketches of the Peruvian congress building—if in fact they are hers—were just doodles?

Rather than address these issues, her supporters have chosen to focus on procedural ones. Some of these are not trivial. She is charged with treason (aggravated terrorism), which, we are told, is impossible, since she is not a Peruvian. The judges who presided at her trial were masked, so that she could not learn their identities. Since the judges had no legal training, it is said, they were not qualified to apply the law. Berenson's lawyers were not allowed, we are told, to cross-examine those who presented evidence against her. As former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark, who recently joined her defense team, has put it, "The military courts of Peru . . . are not concerned with truth and justice. They are instruments of oppression. They convict whomever they choose to convict." The title of the *Times*'s lead editorial on January 16 stated the matter succinctly: "Peru Mocks Due Process."

BERENSON'S DEFENDERS HAVE CHOSEN TO SIDESTEP THE ISSUE OF HER GUILT OR INNOCENCE, AS WELL THEY MIGHT, GIVEN THE EVIDENCE. INSTEAD, THEY FOCUS ON PROCEDURE.

As a matter of fact, it is entirely possible for someone to be charged with treason without being a citizen of that country—even in the United States (see *Carlisle* v. *the United States*, 1872). The judges were all officers in the Peruvian army's judge-advocate general's corps, which is to say, they were lawyers in uniform, not field officers. Berenson's lawyer *was* allowed to cross-examine witnesses, though at lesser length than would have been the case in a civilian trial.

The decision to remand certain cases to "faceless courts," as Peruvian ambassador Ricardo Luna explained in a letter to the *New York Times*, is the result of a consensual decision by the Peruvian congress to protect the lives of judges, who in the past have been exposed to terrorist attacks and reprisals. (Such anonymity, he points out, has been applied in similar cases by other countries, most recently Italy and Colombia.) Unquestionably, such procedures are unusual and far from ideal; on the other hand, so is the security situation in Peru, which over the last 15 years has lost more than 30,000 people to terrorism. As Michael Radu noted in the *Christian Science Monitor*, "In a country like the United States that would translate into an Oklahoma bombing every three days."

One would never guess it from reading the public prints—certainly Berenson took no notice of the fact—but with all its troubles Peru has managed to remain a functioning democracy with regular elections, a free press, and opposition parties. The latter include two Marxist parties whose leaders, accused of "revisionism" for participating in elections, have often been targets of the Tupac Amaru group and its rival, the Sendero Luminoso. At this writing the Sendero problem is largely under control, with its leader, Abimael Guzmán, currently in custody. The Tupac Amaru group remains a serious threat, as the recent raid on the house in Lima demonstrates. Unfortunately, there is a relationship between Peru's gradual success in the war against terrorism and the kind of stern measure taken in the Berenson case.

For their part, ordinary Peruvians are not amused by foreigners who have come to their country in search of revolutionary self-expression. As one nurse slightly older than Lori Berenson told the *Times*, "She's just another one of those liberal, naive gringas who thinks she has been appointed by God to save the world. I don't feel sorry for her." Ungenerous remarks, no doubt, but the woman who made them—and millions like her—have to bear the freight.

In spite of the outcry in liberal and human rights circles in the United States, it is unlikely that Berenson will serve anything like a life sentence. Her case is still subject to appeal, and extrapolating from a similar situation involving a young Italian woman several years ago, she will probably be released and sent home within a year or two. (In the meanwhile she has chosen not to avail herself of the option, available under a bilateral treaty, to serve out her sentence at a correctional facility in the United States.) Once free, she can expect a six-figure book contract, lucrative fees on the lecture circuit, and a made-for-TV movie. For Peruvians, the prospects are less brilliant: lectures from the United States, and several more seasons of altruism coming out of the barrel of a gun.

Mark Falcoff is a resident scholar and specialist in Latin American affairs at the American Enterprise Institute.

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MR. HACKNEY'S OPUS:
Listening to a "National Conversation," Courtesy of the Clinton Administration

By Matt Labash

When National Endowment for the Humanities president Sheldon Hackney launched his new initiative, "A National Conversation on American Pluralism and Identity," he was throttled like a red-headed piñata. "He thought it would be apple pie," a former NEH staffer says, "but it was P.R. winter."

This was two years ago. Hackney called for "a conversation in which all voices are heard," grappling "seriously with the meaning of American pluralism" as we "look in the National Mirror" to reflect on how people are included—or, as he put it in drama-queen dialect, "How wide the circle of we?"

His plan was to fund town-hall meetings across the country to discuss multiculturalism and national identity and civic virtue. These are the kinds of conversations Hackney believes America should be having in church basements and neighborhood bars—except instead of everybody being Methodists or Cubs fans, participants would come from diverse backgrounds, however homogeneous their opinions.

With the project thus framed in blatherskite that could test the abdominal lining of even the most grizzled war correspondent, the media elite began its drubbing. On the Right, George Will said subsidizing diversity talk was "akin to subsidizing crabgrass: the problem is a surplus not a shortage." On the Left, the *Nation*'s Katha Pollitt wrote, "If we're all so bewildered about our national values, what is it we will learn from sharing our ignorance in library basements?" Even the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* took their shots, with the latter's Jonathan Yardley suggesting a cost-effective alternative: Read *Invisible Man*, then pass it around your block.

Originally to be funded in the "high six figures," the largely unmonitored Conversation has by now cost $4.9 million in grants to applicants throughout the country, plus a little-noted $10,000 stipend to each of the 56 state and territorial humanities councils above what they already draw in NEH funding. There have now been 1,540 conversations in 224 cities in 41 states.

Hackney has stressed that this is a nonpartisan, or perhaps pan-partisan, effort. And it's not for elites, as the condescending suggestions in NEH's starter kit for local organizers prove: "Consider the size and temperature (not too hot or too cold) of the room. . . . Serving simple refreshments is a good way to put participants in a relaxed and sharing frame of mind. . . . Chairs should be comfortable."

In a March 1994 meeting in Chicago, 21 scholars were invited to plot the reading materials and parameters of the Conversation. James Q. Wilson and two other neocons were the only non-leftists; the rest of the diverse group ranged from liberal academic Henry Louis Gates, Jr. to liberal academic Amy Gutmann to radical academic Ronald Takaki. Though Hackney concedes conservatives were outgunned by about a 6-to-1 margin, "there was still a wide range of Left," he told me. It's impossible to know what went on, because NEH has not turned over the tapes of these meetings to interested journalists. This is surprising, since ordinarily the endowment's meetings are required to be open by federal sunshine laws. But because the MacArthur Foundation picked up the tab for the planning stage, NEH was able to skirt the federal requirement. Asked why the discussions were never made public, Hackney told me that privacy ensured participants "could have a much freer conversation."

The reading lists that emerged from the meetings have a blind-spin-through-the-card-catalog feel, ranging from Madison to Crèvecoeur to Lani Guinier to bell hooks (the arch-feminist critic who insists on lower-casing her name). Also included is neo-Marxist philosopher Jürgen Habermas, whom (we learn from *Comint* magazine's Lawrence Jarvik) Hackney cited as a primary influence on the Conversation during a gathering on Martha's Vineyard.

Hackney told me he has no recollection of this, saying he hadn't read him until after the program commenced, but perhaps Habermas arouses some of Hackney's more aggressive collectivist verbalizings:

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"We think of ourselves as a practical and self-reliant people, but we have been host to more utopian experiments in communal living than any other nation on earth." This was just one of many justifications he offered for the Conversation in a speech last November.

Which is not to suggest Hackney's a Marxist; more a selective libertarian. During his tenure as president of the University of Pennsylvania, he prided himself on being a rabid guardian of free expression, decrying the Helms amendment and supporting Andres "Piss Christ" Serrano, Robert Mapplethorpe, and all the maverick artists who, through their brave work, pushed the bounds of rectal elasticity.

Meanwhile he enforced a strident p.c. speech code that led to a rare Boner Trifecta. First, Penn decided to punish a Jewish professor who had the audacity to point out to black students that both he and they were descended from slaves. Second, the school sought punitive measures against a Jewish student who called a group of black students "water buffaloes"—a translation from Hebrew that had no racial connotations.

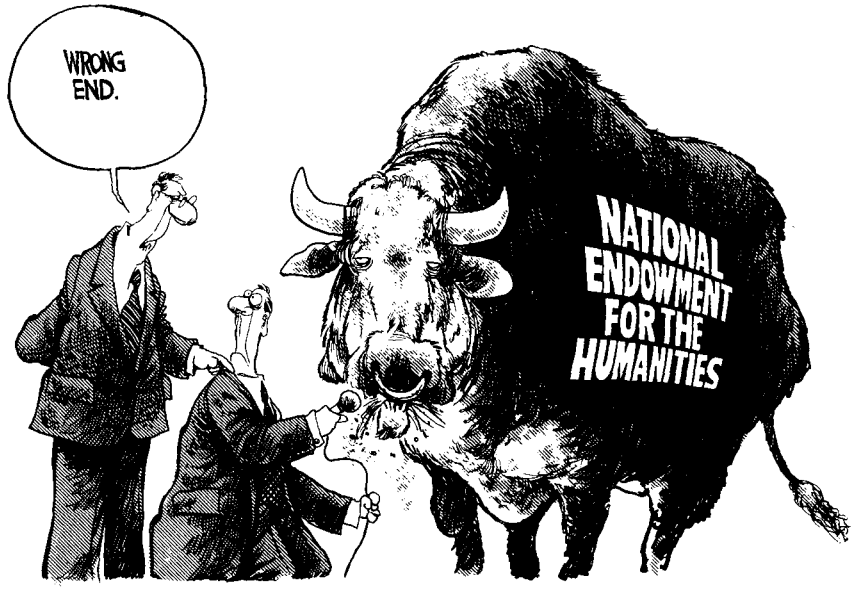
And when black students removed 14,000 copies of the *Daily Pennsylvanian* in protest of a conservative columnist, free expressionist Hackney's initial response was: "Two important university values, diversity and open expression, seem to be in conflict." Though Hackney for the most part denies culpability in the series of incidents (he told me he was simply enforcing the school's constitution), and though he later hardened his line against the destruction of the school paper, a former newspaper staffer says, "He told me that 'stealing papers was an act of free speech in the great liberal tradition' on several occasions."

With this shaky legacy, it's small wonder that Hackney's idea for a National Conversation took fire from both the Left, who contended he was harking back to troglodytic, patriotic flim-flam, and the Right, who weren't exactly eager to join hands and lift voices in "The Circle Game," with Hackney serving as the nation's multicultural facilitator.

But in fairness to Hackney, most of his early detractors were teeing off on his promotional literature and grant lists. They had yet to hear the Conversations firsthand. Last year when Hackney testified before a congressional committee, he threw down the gauntlet, saying: "We are a quiet agency, one might even say unglamorous, but we take comfort in the Biblical promise, 'By their fruits ye shall know them.'"

Here then, are Hackney's fruits.

At the Chicago Field Museum of Natural History's $40,000 Conversation on the subject "Who represents whom?" those of us in attendance sidled after hours up a darkened stairway and around Tyrannosaur skeletons to observe an "Indians Before Columbus" display. In all my Eurobliviousness, I walked through the rather straightforward and benign exhibit with a musty academic group of ortho-soled gawkers in too-tight ski sweaters and student-union widewales worn in the unkempt manner one perfects from rolling out of dorm bunks, past the shower, and straight into American Studies class.



Michael Ramirez

We perused Arapaho and Crow fleshing tools, saw a Cheyenne biography of a warrior, were informed that "we learned to smoke and chew from the Indians," and saw displays on tubular effigy pipes, Southern Death Cults, and all manner of accoutrements from birthing gear to burial smocks.

Then it was off to a conference room for the fabled Conversation. University of Chicago professor Terri Strauss, in her opening salvo, bludgeoned us in

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impenetrable academese about a "crisis of representation" in this "commodified culture" because as "mainstream experts collect, study, classify, interpret, and exhibit others, their work being consciously or unconsciously an act of dominance, . . . the act of collection performs a semantic shift, . . . and the semantic career of objects as they are placed in different contexts is itself fertile ground for museum study."

GOD FORBID, IN SHELDON HACKNEY'S WORLD, THAT EVEN A MINUTE LAPSE WITHOUT AN ACT OF SELF-EXPRESSION.

With the same stultifying effects as one of your better antihistamines, the speech had the gentleman behind me sawing logs into my microrecorder before she could reach her only discernible point, which was: "We could spend a whole evening picking apart this exhibit, but the most important criticism is that there is no First Voice." Message: Exhibiting the fleshing tools of the Arapaho should be done in consultation with them or in their "voice"—as much as anyone knows what that sounds like, since there aren't too many of them kicking down the door of the Field Museum during story time.

Fred Hoxie, head of the Newberry Library's centers on Indian history (playing the part of the bumbling apologetic white guy in the manner of Tom Willis on *The Jeffersons*), christened the night a success before it even began: "This meeting is a rare event in modern life, and that is a civic gathering without a pre-set ideological agenda."

Someone should have told that to the panelists, like Chicago State University's Murry DePillars, a Yaphet Kotto lookalike who harped on having documented evidence that Aristotle and Herodotus studied in Africa. He also assured us that Africans were the first builders in this country and that they were here before Columbus because the Indians had presented gold-tipped spears from Africa. "We have to break down the myths," he told us.

Craig Howe, the bolo-tied director of the D'Arcy McNicholas Center for the History of the American Indian, said that even attempts to incorporate inclusiveness in museum exhibits were just transparent. "What it does is just perpetuate those who are in power to stay in power," Howe postulated, "while giving the impression that we're including more people."

Another trippy, pony-tailed Ph.D. student and self-described Wiccan (a witch) said the museum wasn't a total loss. He'd often go upstairs to the Pawnee Earth Lodge when nobody was around so "the stars could scream at me through the hole. I don't see, but I feel."

Howe gave his prescription for the interactive museum of the future: "We have to get away from the idea of something behind glass—some way where we can make a comment that I can spray-paint on that glass or write on a chalkboard, or something where we can create some kind of dialogue between the users, rather than the users and the exhibitor." God forbid, in Hackney's world, that even a minute lapse without an act of self-expression.

For self-expression is what it's all about; Hackney told me so himself: "People want to feel that they're being heard." That's why he's provided these opinion forums for "the layman," as he never ceases to remind us. Never mind that a good many of the participants aren't laymen at all, but professional victimologists associated with places like the Center for Cultural Understanding and Change—overly conscientious people who find it useful to fritter away public dollars to justify their research and thus grow ever more conscientious.

Put a question to anyone expressing actual diversity of opinion and you're likely to get responses as nebulous as Hackney's. I asked moderator Alaka Wali if problems with the exhibit weren't actually aesthetic more than race-based. And how, for the love of Mary, are you supposed to bring the Amazon to Chicago for a living, breathing exhibit?

Her answer: "That's a good question."

But as Hackney has said, we're not here to be provided answers or to achieve consensus. Based on two L.A. Conversations I heard—"The Multicultural Debate: Language and Labels" and "Shades of Law: Liberty and Justice for All"—the consensus is this: Everybody's getting the shaft!

First, the Multicultural Debate. In a radio studio packed with 31 or so citizen panelists, who were then analyzed by expert panelists, one citizen named Sandra said, "I hate to be called a girl or lady." Citizen #2, Maria, laid bare the duality of her Mexican heritage as "the rape of the European father of my Indian mother." Citizen #3, Belle, complained that entertainment power brokers "are white males. . . . I want to see my race portrayed equally, because my children are going to suffer. If they turn on the TV and see negative stereotypes, that's all they think they can be." Citizen #4, Dave, had a recipe for finding Hackney-like commonality: "Instead of saying 'Asian-American,' maybe 'American-Asian' is a better description."

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Playing the stock Hackney character of the graceless "I'm-white-but-all-right" boot-licker was Citizen #1, the aforementioned Sandra, who went into overcompensation mode: "But we love our black friends. We love that our street has Mexicans." Why, she even dances at B.B. King's joint, attends Native American fairs, and eats at Mexican restaurants because "there are so many things that are more fun than whitebread culture, which is actually pretty dull."

And about her daughter's black boyfriend, Sandra was rhapsodic: "Ricky's a great guy! I love him. I know he's black. He's 6′4″ and very dark. It's not like I look at him and see a white guy, but it's great!"

If there was one lesson to be gleaned from this Conversation, it's that Caucasians yearning to relate can be painfully awkward. There was the example of one conciliatory citizen trying to draw a distinction between independent West Indian blacks and American or "home-grown" blacks taught self-hatred by a white dominant majority.

This caught the attention of "expert" panelist Maulana Karenga (best known for inventing Kwanzaa and doing time for torturing a young woman, respectively), who pounced in his Cosby-meets-Yoda gurgle. "Can you imagine somebody saying 'home-grown white folks'?" he said. "How do you *grow* blacks? That kind of language imprisons and degrades. You can't do that to black people talking about you domesticate them as if they were animals."

Karenga also took over the "Shades of Law" Conversation. He bemoaned the "blue code of silence" under "the state of siege" to "ensure and perpetuate the domination" of blacks, many of whom are not imprisoned but "in captivity."

This caused South Pasadena police chief Thomas Mahoney to get his Irish up, at least until he let it be known he had an Asian-American (American-Asian?) wife. Citizen Pam experienced "a major paradigm shift" when Mahoney explained his matrimonial orientation. She had first viewed him with skepticism but now realized: "No, he made an intimate commitment with this cultural diversity." The result? "I could listen to him better."

This seemed like the kind of breakthrough Hackney had anticipated. But when I asked Hackney why he'd allowed a noted bomb-thrower like Karenga to intrude on his Conversation, in violation of Conversation Kit ground rules 2 and 3 ("All participants will show respect for the views expressed by others" and "Speakers will be brief, no one will monopolize the conversation"), he convincingly pled ignorance about the entire project. After all, he said, those holding the Conversations in localities across the nation have near-complete autonomy once NEH's grant money is in hand.

Could this be the same Conversation Hackney described in November as having "the integrity and currency that draws people along across the tiger pits of discord and suspicion"? It seems instead to illuminate the oxymoronic cross-purpose of exploring our collective identity as individuals. In Hackney's Conversation this is the coming together of people to exacerbate our differences, celebrate our slights, rail against perceived injustices—all of which should help us harness the ephemeral quality of collective identity, moving us forward as a cohesive unit.

But even with this garbled objective aside, the Conversation is often lacking even as intelligent discourse "enlightened by the humanities." Consider this exchange during one of the L.A. panels:

Citizen: "When you say 'American' because we are North American, there are also South Americans. Mexicans are Americans because they live on the continent of South America, so if you really want to throw a monkey wrench into what is an American, deal with that."

Host Larry Mantle: "Perhaps 'United Statesians' would be a better term."

Of course, one must make allowances for human frailty and shortcomings. Such are the pitfalls of free-wheeling discussion. Tolerance is part of the package, and although it is virtuous to love all God's children, two things are certain: a) You wouldn't want any of these children operating on you, and b) any epiphany harvested from contact with said children should probably be discarded immediately.

IF A LESSON CAN BE GLEANED FROM THIS CONVERSATION, IT'S THAT CAUCASIANS YEARNING TO RELATE CAN BE PAINFULLY AWKWARD.

This truth became self-evident after examining the Tucson writing project at the University of Arizona (funded by a $30,000 NEH grant), of which Hackney had no recollection. This was a crying shame, since it strikes at the very essence of his notion of a collective identity: a collaborative writing project whereby the author has to incorporate thoughts of other group members and spit them out in their own unique narrative.

Funding publication of such a project yields all the

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negatives of an undergrad creative writing program (bad prose, self-indulgent prose, vomit-inducing prose) while negating the only positive: making sure it stays within the confines of a university campus.

Here's a passage from the pilot program from which the grant was received: "I am committed to our special family. And so are my friends. That's why we hang out in the parks and do drugs. To share in the experience together. To talk. Before the days are gone."

And here's an offering from a college-bound flower after having her first sexual experience with her boyfriend, "a gifted artist and a pot smoker": "I went to kiss my mother goodnight and she remarked about my flushed cheeks. Without thinking, I practically flung my arms around her neck in preparation for a passionate kiss. I managed to reverse the impulse in time to make it a mother-daughter peck but wondered whether she had noticed the unusual duration and strength of my embrace. This new kind of kissing was quickly becoming second nature."

If one is struck by a sort of pre-teen sheen permeating the Conversation, like a remedial civics class, it gets even more elementary. Take the Occidental College Conversation, where participants from mixed Caucasian and low-income Latino neighborhoods outside Los Angeles sat in groups at round tables covered with construction paper maps and 64-pack Crayolas.

At one table, a Kiwanis club retiree grilled three Latino high-schoolers attending for extra credit, asking each, "Are you in a gang?" Reuben, with his goatee, hoop earring, and too-cool-for-the-room grimace, shrugged, "No."

One elementary-school teacher in a phlegm-colored V-neck, thick glasses, and macrame hair piped in: "Gang members are regular people, it's not like they're from another planet." This, after her candid disclosure that she chose to live in the neighborhood because it "had great diversity."

"But hey, you don't have to go bad," said the Kiwanis guy. "You turned out all right, so did Juan and Miguel and everybody here." This was a testament to his acute instincts, considering he'd just met the youths minutes before.

The teacher and an Occidental College student concurred that all these kids and adjoining neighborhoods were victims of negative media stereotypes. The teacher moaned that they never picked up on positive images at her rough-and-tumble school: "In December we had a poetry reading, and there wasn't one camera there."

Another bubble-headed teacher from a better school district chimed in: "Our cheerleaders were on TV the other day," to visible flinching from her tablemates. And then they mapped, drawing crayon lines to their most visited spots: friends' homes, Thai restaurants, hardware stores (this was the Kiwanis guy).

As the macrame-haired teacher strained to draw her school route, the cheerleader-loving teacher asked, "Do you want me to draw for you?"

Macrame (snidely): "No, I have a feeling you don't know the area."

And then they surveyed their work. Cheerleader: "I see some definite intersection here."

Macrame: "Gee, we're so close to each other."

Success! And it's not the only one. There are other reports of similar successes in the NEH propaganda, such as this testimonial from a retired West Virginia school teacher: "I left so revitalized by the sincerity, frankness and respect among participants that I wish I were 20 years younger." Another project director claimed he was fortunate enough to hear a woman remark as she left, "This is how I want my tax dollars spent."

That can be arranged. With only one more official grant cycle left for the National Conversation (in March), Hackney's formal initiative will officially end. "But if other grantees apply and say we really like what you guys are doing, like the American Library Association," says NEH spokesman Jim Turner, "we may well determine the projects they ran were so successful that, hey, let's do it again."

Odds are the American Library Association may want to give it another go, since the first Conversation grant to this estimable group cost taxpayers $383,000. Indeed, it appears most people are receptive to receiving free money from Hackney. Many of the project directors I spoke with, when asked about Hackney's concept, said, "I was skeptical at first, but . . . " Amazing how that skepticism unanimously receded after the grant checks had been cashed!

This year, the NEH's budget has been cut to $110 million, a 36 percent reduction. That puts a crimp in the inarguably productive functions of the National Endowment for the Humanities, tasks like historical and newspaper preservation and the collection of presidential papers. But because each state has a humanities council, and because the percentage of the endowment's budget that goes to the state humanities councils remains the same, a formal initiative by Hackney is not necessary to continue the Conversation if people desire it.

One of the Conversation's few congressional critics, Ralph Regula of Ohio, hopes that won't happen. Bringing people together, he says, "is nice, but I could

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do that without spending a dime. I don't think you need to formalize it. And after you've had it, what do you do with it?" Hackney knows what to do with it: He'll write a report sometime in the fall, and is almost certain it will be published.

And between now and then? Conversationeers will collude in fits of metaphoria. Because as Hackney said in November, the Conversation "is at flood tide now, so I invite you to launch your own deep-draft vessel, either with or without flotation devices. . . . The harbor is big enough for many ships."

Metaphors are an integral part of Hackney's American identity. He's given great thought to the subject, since "the melting pot . . . doesn't account for the cultural persistence of pre-American identities" and "'mosaic' or 'quilt' imply 'sharp and permanent boundaries between groups.'"

One of the Conversations was titled "Educational Melting Pot or Salad Bowl?" Hackney once toyed with "salad" as a metaphor because he said the flavors "bleed over" and because, according to him, the phrase *e pluribus unum* comes from a Virgil poem about salad. But which is the right salad? There are so many: taco, Jello, pasta, three-bean.

An Ames, Iowa, panelist thought it useful to think of America as a "tossed salad," while another described it as "a stew, sitting on the stove for a long time, and some of the little parts you don't know what they are anymore, but some of the things stay in as chunks."

And then it struck, right there in a Hackney piece in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Jazz! Why of course—with its indigenous non-hierarchical structure, born as a disdained expression of a marginalized group, jazz was the answer all along. Not salad. Jazz.

Thus the fruits of the National Conversation: pedantic multicultural blasts from rancid academics, ethnocentric turf-spraying all over your Sunday suit, and a $6 million quest for the appropriate American metaphor. ♦

Getting Rid of Rohatyn

By Irwin M. Stelzer

Bill Clinton calls it "outrageous." Because of Republican opposition, Felix Rohatyn asked that his name be withdrawn from consideration for the post of vice chairman of the Federal Reserve Board. Press secretary Mike McCurry told reporters that attacks on Rohatyn are "based mostly . . . on politics, rather than a serious review and judgment of his credentials, his experience, his background, and his views." Rohatyn, who had lobbied relentlessly for the job, added that he too was troubled, not by his failure to get it, but by the inability "to have a rational dialogue about hugely important economic issues."

Wrong. Senate Republicans had the best of reasons for shooting down Rohatyn's prospective nomination: They disagree sharply with his views on economic issues and were sent to Washington by their constituents to use their power to "advise and consent" so as to deny positions to candidates with whom they disagree. No personality clash; no scandal mongering; no Borking; no mere partisanship. Only sharp differences on important policy questions, differences of the sort that *should* be given weight when reviewing presidential nominations.

Irwin M. Stelzer, a frequent contributor, is director of regulatory policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

Start with a detail. Rohatyn was to be appointed to represent the Kansas City Federal Reserve district. Must be some mistake, you say. Isn't Rohatyn that New York investment banker who helped pilot Lazard Frères to the top rank of investment banking firms from his Rockefeller Center office? Isn't he the same guy frequently seen in New York's trendier restaurants and at its charity balls, and on the pages of the *New York Times* and the *New York Review of Books*? In short, isn't Rohatyn as New York as Woody Allen and Ed Koch?

Well, yes. But it seems that there is already one

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New Yorker on the Fed board, and the law requires geographic diversification. Since Rohatyn is building a house in Wyoming, Clinton sought to overcome the inconvenient geographic disability by designating Rohatyn the Fed member from Marlboro country. Nothing particularly illegal about this, apparently; just another example of the Clintons' disrespect for the spirit, if not the letter, of the law, in this case one designed to see that agricultural as well as financial interests are represented at the Fed.

Clinton faces a bit of a problem. If he had his way, he would not reappoint Fed chairman Alan Greenspan when his term expires in April. And not only because Greenspan is a Republican; the chairman is an inflation hawk, disinclined to risk a round of inflation to stimulate growth in an economy already at full or almost-full employment, and unlikely to push interest rates down merely to please a president with his eye focused on the November elections. But the markets won't tolerate the canning of Greenspan.

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So the president came up with Rohatyn, described by the *New York Times* as a "shrewd counterweight to the chairman's instinctual conservatism." But Republicans on the Senate Finance Committee weren't so sure that a Greenspan counterweight is what the Fed should have as a vice chairman. The fact is that the president's choice for vice chairman espouses economic policies so far to the left of the national consensus for shrunken government as to make him almost an anachronism in this age of limited government. Indeed, that the president was reaching for a man who the *Times* admiringly says "is among the few highly successful figures on Wall Street who back progressive causes and activist government" tells us something (as Sen. Connie Mack, the key congressional opponent of the Rohatyn nomination, said) about Clinton's sincerity in declaring his conversion to the proposition that "the era of big government is over."

In Rohatyn the president found a perfect instrument to inject some of the old-time liberal religion into America's economic policy. Better even than Alan Blinder, the Clinton appointee who resigned to return to his economics professorship at Princeton University. Blinder was certainly softer on inflation than Greenspan, but he was a trained economist who carefully weighed his desire for lower interest rates and more rapid economic growth against the dangers of higher inflation. Rohatyn has no such analytical training. But he does have a host of inclinations, a mindset that he has described as favoring "energetic domestic policies," "some variant of a national industrial policy," and government action to correct our "overdependence on foreign capital and foreign energy."

No small-government man, this investment banker. Devolve power to the states? Quite the contrary: We need "some assumption of local burdens by the federal government." Lower taxes? No again. Rohatyn favors an increase in gasoline taxes "tied to infrastructure investment" and would postpone tax cuts "until a balanced budget is within reach." Would he have spent sleepless nights worrying about inflation, as central bankers are expected to do? No a third time: Rohatyn dismisses "the inordinate fear of inflation resulting from higher growth," thinks Greenspan is foolish to accept 2.5 percent as the growth rate beyond which we are likely to see a resurgence of inflation, and wants the president and Congress to "target an economic growth rate averaging 3 percent to 3.5 percent a year over the next decade."

Here Rohatyn is on particularly shaky ground, as the editorial writers of the *New York Times* would know if they hadn't joined the thousands of others who regularly treat the newspaper's Sunday magazine section as a must-miss. For a recent issue contained a most compelling article by Stanford economist Paul Krugman, hardly a man of the hard Right. Krugman points out that Greenspan's enemies, among them "financier-pundit Felix Rohatyn," say that the Fed "is keeping interest rates unnecessarily high, in a pointless war against a phantom enemy." But, says Krugman, those who propose to have the economy grow more rapidly than the Fed's 2.5 percent target rate are "wildly unrealistic." Experience over the past 20 years shows that for every point of annual growth beyond 2.5 percent, the unemployment rate falls by half a point. If Rohatyn were to have his way and push the economy ahead at a 3.5 percent clip for even one year—much less a decade—the unemployment rate would drop so low that inflation would take off. "There is a lesson in all this," writes Krugman, "namely, that some of our most influential

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economic commentators are not in the habit of doing much homework before issuing their pronouncements."

If Rohatyn's grab bag of big-government, high-tax views weren't enough to turn off Senate Republicans, the rumor that he was destined for the added role of inside-the-White-House policy adviser would have done the trick. As would the likelihood that the Lazard Frères deal-maker would provide a back-door channel for the president into the inner sanctum of the Fed, which is supposed to be insulated from such political shenanigans.

And Rohatyn's famous penchant for publicity would have made it difficult for him to adopt the enigmatic policy of Greenspan, who prides himself on telling everyone as little about how he reaches his decisions in as many words as he can possibly muster. One person who worked closely with Rohatyn when he was chairman of the Municipal Assistance Corporation during the New York City fiscal crisis of 1975 still resents the success with which Rohatyn worked the press to make sure that he, rather than then-governor Hugh Carey, received credit for bailing out the city. Little wonder that the *Wall Street Journal* fears Rohatyn might find it difficult "to curtail his public candor, as the Fed expects its policy-makers to do."

None of this is to deny that Rohatyn has had a brilliant career as an investment banker, or that he has helped to propel his firm to the first rank in its field. The same can be said of Robert Rubin, the investment banker who gave up Goldman Sachs for the Treasury Department—and squandered his credibility by threatening to default on the nation's bonds if the Republicans refused to give in to Rubin's boss in the battle of the budget.

There might be a lesson there for Rohatyn: A political association with Bill Clinton is not the sure way to cap a brilliant career in the private sector. Ask fellow investment banker Roger Altman, who got entangled in Whitewater; or Webster Hubbell during visiting hours; or a Rohatyn comrade-in-arms in many merger wars, former White House counsel Bernie Nussbaum. For the sake of posterity, better that Rohatyn retire to that porch in Wyoming and write his memoirs under the Big Sky. ♦

GLOBALONEY, GOP-STYLE

By Jeremy Rabkin

Republicans have been doing a lot of snarling against the United Nations in the past year. And Republican congressional leaders are promising to translate this mood into legislation over the next few months. Some of the energy on these issues reflects legitimate concerns. A lot of it surely is motivated, too, by political calculations in an election year. Even when it comes to campaign tactics, though, it would be nice if Republicans remembered that their candidate will reach the White House only by defeating Bill Clinton, not Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The Republican penchant for running against the U.N. secretary general threatens to make serious issues look entirely silly.

Take the case of Army Specialist Michael New, who was court-martialed and discharged from the military at the end of January. New had refused to wear U.N. insignia and a U.N. beret when his unit was deployed to a U.N. peace-keeping force. The army found him guilty of insubordinate conduct. Within 24 hours, 15 congressmen (almost all Republicans) sponsored a resolution insisting that the army had no authority to require troops to wear U.N. insignia and accordingly condemning New's court-martial conviction as "groundless." In the Senate, there were demands for speedy action on a bill—cosponsored by Majority Leader Bob Dole and Majority Whip Trent Lott, with some two dozen others (all Republicans)—protecting members of the armed forces from any order to wear U.N. insignia.

The underlying issue here is far from frivolous. Can the president place American forces under U.N. field command, as Clinton has done in Macedonia? Can resolutions of the Security Council authorize deployment of U.S. troops to war zones without direct authorization from the Congress, as has happened now

Jeremy Rabkin teaches government at Cornell University.

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in Bosnia, and earlier in Somalia and Haiti? These are very serious questions.

Congress tried to address them in a set of restrictions on U.N. commitments included in the defense appropriations bill, which President Clinton vetoed in December. The debate deserves to be reopened. Carping about shoulder patches or hat styles is not a serious way to do that. And it is hard to believe Republicans want these issues to be raised by encouraging civil disobedience in the ranks of the American military.

But striking at empty symbols has become a reflex among Republican leaders. At the same time they were waving the flag on behalf of Michael New, congressional leaders launched an absurd overreaction to the suggestion of the U.N. secretary general that the United Nations might seek to remedy its chronic budget crisis with a tax on international air travel. Notions of this kind have been kicking around for a long time. And Boutros-Ghali merely mentioned the possibility in passing, in the context of a lengthy interview with the BBC. Only the *Washington Times* picked up the story in the United States, but its initial coverage, in the last week of January, was enough to provoke a mini-tempest in Washington. Sen. Jesse Helms, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, promised hearings. Sen. Dole promised a new bill and indeed introduced the bill within less than a week.

Dole's bill would cut off all U.S. funding to the U.N. if it tries to impose a tax or fee on U.S. citizens, tries to borrow money from international institutions like the World Bank, or so much as engages in "any effort to develop, advocate, promote, or publicize any proposal concerning taxation or fees" on U.S. persons. But the U.N. has no authority to impose taxes and no way of granting itself such authority. The IMF and World Bank have already disavowed the authority to make loans to the U.N. and, given the weighted voting in these bodies, will not change their position without U.S. concurrence. And the Clinton administration itself has announced its opposition to such initiatives. Nor can the U.N. force the United States to collect any taxes on its behalf.

On the other hand, if other countries want to tax foreign airline traffic passing through their airports, the United States has no easy way of stopping them from doing so, whatever the U.N. says or does not say. Nor can the United States stop other countries from making additional contributions to the U.N., whether from such "international" taxes or from more traditional revenue sources. But such contributions will never make the U.N. free of dependence on American contributions, which are still much in arrears from past withholding.

The Clinton administration has been pressing for fiscal and managerial reforms within the chronically spendthrift international organization. Perhaps the administration has not pressed its concerns as vigorously as it might; certainly it has done so less effectively than one might have hoped. What do congressional Republicans want in the way of reform? A tantrum over the figment of international taxing authority does not do much to clarify the stakes.

More serious and more disturbing than this huffing fit is Dole's warning shot against the new World Trade Organization. The WTO was established last year to oversee the implementation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. A system of reciprocal commitments created in 1947 at U.S. instigation and elaborated through successive rounds of negotiations among most of the world's trading nations, GATT has been the central instrument for lowering barriers to international trade. The WTO for the first time provides a dispute-settlement body to judge complaints that particular nations are violating the rules. Dole's bill would establish a commission of federal judges to review any decision of the WTO that goes against the United States and issue a formal report on whether that decision was truly in accord with the international trade norms agreed to by the United States. If the commission issued three critical reports within five years, Congress would automatically take up a resolution to force American withdrawal from the WTO.

Dole announced his intention to put through this plan during the lame duck session of December 1994. The Clinton administration endorsed the proposal as a way to buy support for the GATT agreement establishing the WTO, which required congressional approval. While the new Congress was preoccupied with the Republican Contract and then with protracted budget battles, the Dole bill was left on the sidelines. Interest in the bill picked up again at the beginning of 1996, however, when the WTO issued its first ruling on a formal dispute—a challenge to a U.S. environmental law brought by Venezuela, in which the WTO sided with Venezuela. Dole says his bill is now more urgent than ever as a means of "protecting U.S. sovereignty."

The argument is hard to swallow. The ultimate sanction behind WTO rulings is for the complaining party to impose trade restrictions on the perpetrator. The WTO simply holds that such retaliation is warranted and suggests its proper scale and character. In the recent case, for example, Venezuela (which had

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complained about an American measure imposing higher purity standards on imported than on domestic gasoline) might impose an equivalent restriction on imports from the United States. But Venezuela could do this with or without a WTO ruling, and with or without a GATT framework. The hope is that a formal dispute-settlement mechanism will limit the occasions for such tit-for-tat trade friction. As WTO member states agree to swallow their disappointment at a particular unfavorable ruling in the expectation that the next ruling may be more favorable, it is hoped that the WTO will come to be seen as impartial and will win general confidence.

The United States was one of the strongest advocates of this system in the negotiations that led to the establishment of the WTO. And for a very good reason: As the world's largest trading nation, we were most often in the position of finding fault with trade restrictions imposed by other nations. If the WTO turns out to be systematically slighting of American concerns (an unlikely development, given the central importance of the United States in world trade), we can withdraw from the organization whenever we wish to do so. But that assumes that we would prefer a trading system with no umpire to one with a less than perfect umpire.

The practical effect of the Dole bill would be to advertise our threat to withdraw if WTO rulings are not to our liking and to give Congress the confidence to make good on this threat. But it is hard to see what is gained by associating a panel of federal judges with this bluster. On the one hand, other countries are unlikely to be impressed with the legitimacy of American complaints just because they are endorsed by American judges. On the other hand, when the judges are told that their evaluation may trigger American withdrawal from the WTO, they may be extremely skittish about offering negative evaluations. The Congress (and the U.S. trade representative) may, in turn, be made more reluctant to challenge WTO polices when the challenge is not endorsed by this judicial monitoring commission. But why should trade policy hinge on the advice of unelected judges with no particular background in trade policy? The real point seems to be to prove—to ourselves?—that while we have agreed to give the WTO's dispute-settling system a chance, we don't intend to trust it.

Yet, as in the matters of Michael New and of Boutros-Ghali's U.N. tax, there is a serious issue here. The WTO not only has machinery for settling individual disputes. It also is empowered to amend trade rules, replacing provisions negotiated as part of the comprehensive compromise packages in successive GATT rounds over the past 50 years. The Clinton administration has urged that the WTO try to promulgate worker-protection standards, so that in the future importing nations could retaliate against exporting countries for their substandard wages or unfair treatment of workers. This move has the potential to do a great deal of mischief, as do similar demands to enforce environmental standards through trading rules. Some Republicans have urged that the president be granted fast-track negotiating authority on future trade deals only on condition that they not include labor or environmental side issues, but Dole's current position is that no such negotiating authority should be granted at all until after the 1996 elections. This is flirting with protectionism, more than it is laying the basis for any clarification of trade policy.

In the end, the issue always turns out to be not whether we trust some international body but whether we trust our own president. That isn't a frivolous question, either, especially with a president who seems attracted to a dreamy sort of globalism. But the importance of the stakes only underscores the point: Congressional Republicans need to focus on what American policies they want to secure, not on what international bogeymen they want to flay. The serious debate, as always, is at home. And a presidential election year is a good time for Sen. Dole and others to try seriously to engage that debate. ♦

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He's Numbers One

By Bruce Chapman

Where was Nicholas Eberstadt when I needed him?

In 1984, the Urban Institute produced a study that purported to show how poverty had grown during the Reagan years. The trouble was, the Urban Institute used an improper base for its analysis: 1980 to 1984. It sounded plausible enough; at least no one in the press challenged it. Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980, wasn't he, and here we were in 1984, so wasn't this a fair first-term report card? It wasn't. Jimmy Carter was president all through 1980, the point in time when inflation truly undermined the poor as well as the middle class. The first Reagan budget was not even passed until the summer of 1981, and the supply-side tax cuts did not take hold until early 1983 (along with a rousing economic recovery). The report in no way was a fair reflection of what was going on then under Reagan policies.

From my perch in the White House's little Office of Planning and Evaluation, it was a maddening prospect. How could you ever counteract so many bad studies and reports? John Cogan, then assistant budget director, and I talked to the Urban Institute folks and vented our annoyance on them, to little effect. But it seemed to me then that someone in a prominent position outside the administration was needed to call studies like that to public account, and on a regular basis. When bad statistics were reported, they should be pounced on like a bad play or book, and their false premises and ideological motivations unmasked. What was needed was a statistics critic, someone who would cover the world of numbers the way other critics cover drama or stock market trends.

Now, at last, I have a candidate for national statistics critic: Nicholas Eberstadt. A visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and the Center for Population Studies, Eberstadt is author of *The Tyranny of Numbers* (AEI Press, 303 pages, $16.95), one of the best lay guides to the misuse of data since that splendid little 1954 classic by Darrell Huff, *How to Lie with Statistics*. Eberstadt's great gift is to show our generation, in readable English, how bad numbers make bad

Nicholas Eberstadt

Kent Lemon

Bruce Chapman, a former director of the U.S. Census Bureau and deputy assistant to President Reagan, is president of Discovery Institute, the Seattle-based public policy center.

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policy and why good numbers must be interpreted in the light of reason as well as science.

"The modern state," he writes, "is an edifice built on numbers. Modern governments, unlike the diverse governments of earlier times, require statistical information simply to function *as* modern governments: to perform the tasks now conventionally assigned to and expected of them."

Maybe being able to measure so many kinds of activities improves public decision-making, but "'quantophrenia'—an idolatry of numbers," Eberstadt says, represents the potential misuse of statistical tools. "Where unshakable traditional beliefs or passing superstitions played official roles in the past," he writes, "we now witness overconfidence based on a false precision."

He does not get into the philosophical origins of quantophrenia. But surely it is based in the modern intellectual's mania for materialism—the constant effort to quantify everything and to deny that there are principles and experience that cannot be quantified. This materialism is a philosophical construct that ought to crumble, and Eberstadt is helping to knock down that corner of the structure where the over-reliance on, and the misuse of, statistics can be found.

The belief that a state can be governed scientifically, through the insights of statistics, he says, is often dangerously wrong. A strictly demographic understanding of man, for example, provided much of the rationale for establishing the procrustean categories of race and nationalism that have caused far more suffering in this century than they have alleviated.

But even in activities where reliance on statistics is justified, great damage can be done when statistical series are incompetently designed, or worse, when politics or ideology misshapes them. If, on one hand, the political system demands numbers as a scientific means of determining truth, and then, on the other, is prepared to ignore questions or data that interfere with the prevailing state ideology, what you get is truly a "tyranny of numbers."

Eberstadt introduces this theme early on and then elaborates it in the 11 short essays which comprise his book. Most striking are his examinations of domestic poverty statistics and the national-security implications of demographic trends. What he contributes to both subjects ought to inform the policies of the next national administration that honestly wants to know what is going on.

Take poverty-rate numbers, whose annual release creates a media frenzy. The usual purpose of the media handwringing is to prove that the rising rate of poverty—or, if it is not rising, the "continuing gap between whites and blacks"—indicates government is not spending enough on health care, welfare, and food programs. In the Reagan years, we tried to point out that the official poverty rate did not include the value of such welfare; if it did, the rate would be substantially lower. But Eberstadt makes an additional and useful point: "The famous poverty rate may not actually provide a good measure of material deprivation for contemporary America."

NICHOLAS EBERSTADT'S GREAT GIFT IS TO SHOW OUR GENERATION, IN READABLE ENGLISH, HOW BAD NUMBERS MAKE BAD POLICY.

An index of spending by Americans would measure this "material deprivation" and suddenly show a clearer and more positive picture of the "circumstances of our country's vulnerable groups." Had such an index been around in recent years,

> a rather different policy debate might have been framed in the United States. . . . For while absolute deprivation, in a material sense, has been on the wane, dependence on government largesse among the public at large has been steadily on the rise. By 1990, more than 50 million Americans—more than a fifth of the nation—lived in households that accepted public means-tested benefits. Progress against material deprivation, it would seem, was indeed purchased over that generation—but at the price of the economic independence for large numbers of previously self-reliant Americans.

Eberstadt shows, likewise, that infant mortality figures lead erroneously to conclusions that encourage further government growth. For some decades, the infant mortality rate has been falling, but not as fast in the U.S. as in some other countries and not as fast among blacks as whites. The liberal assumption is generally that the numbers show a failure to deliver enough health care to the poor, especially children. There are other explanations, however, including statistics-gathering inadequacies in some other industrial countries that make us look worse than we are and the very success of the U.S. at bringing low-weight fetuses to term. Infant mortality rates do not measure miscarriages.

But the greatest factor in worsening these numbers might be the attitude of the mothers who typically produce at-risk babies. It is possible that such mothers do not get care because they do not care enough to seek it out. For example, there would seem to be a high correlation between low birth weights and the drinking, smoking and drug-taking habits of the babies' mothers. This introduces an attitudinal dimension that federal health

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surveys do not even attempt to explore, leaving a big hole in our understanding of the problem and quite possibly biasing public policy in the wrong directions.

In short, if social *de-moralization* is an important contributing factor to a wide array of negative social pathologies that do not yield to improved economic conditions, and no statistical series measures such a thing, how can a statistics-driven polity make correct decisions?

De-moralization is also a theme of Eberstadt's tour of the inadequate statistics that charted—and failed to chart—the decline of the Soviet Union. Throughout the 1980s, the CIA was responsible for keeping track of the economy and demography of the Soviet Union. Eberstadt describes it as "probably the largest research project ever undertaken in the social sciences." Unfortunately, the corridors of faceless, but influential, analysts at the CIA often could not match one Murray Feshbach at the Census Bureau (now at Georgetown University).

I remember Feshbach as a rumpled numbers sleuth who could shake a Soviet table of health statistics, hold it against a mirror, compare it to student enrollments in Tashkent and blanket sales in Minsk, and then suddenly make it tell us that mortality rates were rising, not falling, in the USSR and that ethnic Russians were about to become a minority population in the nation they had long dominated. Feshbach wasn't just a statistician. He knew Russia, Russians, and human nature. He was well liked and admired at the CIA, I'm sure, but the spooks went right on giving top U.S. officeholders an overly generous accounting of Soviet life.

Failure by the CIA to assess the deterioration of the Soviet Union in its last decade may well have contributed to the surprise with which the ultimate Soviet collapse was greeted in the West. (In a foreword to *The Tyranny of Numbers*, Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan reminds us that the record shows that *he* was not surprised. Neither, let it show as well, was Ronald Reagan.) With pointed understatement typical of his writing, Eberstadt wonders "whether a better analysis of available data on the Soviet Bloc might not have helped hasten the end of the cold war and contributed to an earlier release of those captive peoples from their bondage."

HOW CAN A STATISTICS-DRIVEN POLITY MAKE CORRECT DECISIONS IF THE SOURCE OF SOCIAL PATHOLOGIES IS DE-MORALIZATION?

The Soviet Union is gone, of course, but the failures of government statistics to capture the reality of international aid (measured for inputs, not outputs, Eberstadt explains) or food production (the raw data often are just not reliable) continue to cloud the minds of policy-makers.

In his final and most brilliant chapter, Eberstadt urges us to take world demographic trends seriously. He says we must demand statistics that measure the real causes of population growth and population shifts, and demand public policies that speak to those causes.

Demographic trends overcome even wars and disasters, and fertility is the most determinative demographic trend of all. Looking at the world today, we can see that the relatively stable, democratic West and Japan are growing very slowly, while less stable countries are expanding fast. This, Eberstadt notes, "may be viewed as a demographic problem, but it may just as accurately be described as a moral and intellectual problem."

And it is a security problem. Eberstadt cites the examples of Israel, where Arabs may outnumber Jews in a generation or so, and Lebanon, where the long political power-sharing arrangement of Christians and Muslims broke down under the disproportionate population gains of the Muslims and helped precipitate a civil war.

In 1930, he reminds us, "areas of European population" represented about one-third of the world's number. "At their zenith European powers not only bestrode the earth, they also peopled it," Eberstadt notes. The largest countries at that time were also the most powerful. By 2025, however, it is expected that all the Western countries together will have fewer people than India alone. And many fewer than China.

Big populations may mean big problems, but they also probably will mean big economies and big armies. "The Western countries' share of global economic output could be anticipated to decline. . . . One can easily envision a world more unreceptive, and indeed more threatening, to the interests of the United States and its allies than the one we know today."

Eberstadt recognizes that the "interests" of the United States include preservation of traditions of liberty and democracy, and he acknowledges that statisticians cannot strategize the best ways to meet this threat, or even determine whether or how it is a threat.

But many policy-makers in this country, who are so uncritical in their employment of numbers, are equally careless in seeing to it that the right numbers are collected, and in the right way, and that good sense is used in making use of them. More Nicholas Eberstadts would help. ♦

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Books

THE AMERICAN CREED

By Woody West

In a rude time, the notion of American "exceptionalism" has been spun on its axis on campuses and in other closets of higher social criticism. In such precincts, America is portrayed as exceptional usually for its racism and sexism, its economic and social inequities, the scope of its flaws.

It is useful, then, when a modulated voice penetrates the clamor. Seymour Martin Lipset's *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (Norton, 384 pages, $27.50) offers a perspective grounded in history and based on honest empirical comparisons with other developed countries. "There can be little question," Lipset writes, "that the hand of providence has been on a nation which finds a Washington, a Lincoln, or a Roosevelt when it needs him. When I write the above sentence, I believe that I draw scholarly conclusions, although I will confess that I write also as a proud American. But I should hasten to add, not as one who thinks his country is better than other democratic societies, but as one who believes that the greatness of free polities lies in their institutionalization of conflict, of the continued struggles for freer and more humanely decent societies."

America is exceptional in its genesis, born from a revolutionary event and, as part of that origin, possessing a "Creed" embodied in the Declaration of Independence and a "political religion" that developed from it. This is a stark distinction from countries that define themselves "by a common history as birthright communities, not by ideology." From the seedbed of the American Creed—liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire—has flowered a society competitive, meritocratic, anti-statist, religious, and committed to equality of opportunity.

This would all seem the stuff of a primer. But Lipset insists that contemporary trends and social phenomena be viewed in historical context. Preoccupied with the present as most of us are (for reasons of practicality, contrariness, or laziness), our failure to contemplate the past can lead to civic sourness—the assumption that things are bad because we don't actually consider how bad they have been before.

What is less evident is that so many trends we mutter about—crime, drug abuse, permissiveness, and divorce, on the short list—are the waste matter of precisely those characteristics that make America "qualitatively different." Lipset contends that the positive and the negative are frequently opposite sides of the same coin. "Individualism as a value," he writes, "leads not only to self-reliance and a reluctance to be dependent on others, but also to independence in family relationships, including a greater propensity to leave a marriage if the marital relationship becomes troubled." And America's higher divorce rate goes back to the 19th century, not to the day before yesterday. Lipset, now a professor at George Mason University, appears to have read every study, survey, sample, and poll since social science was a pup, and he marches and counter-marches this material like a Marine Drill Instructor.

There is one "great exception" to the Creed—the experience of American blacks. Affirmative action and its corollary "quotas" in the past quarter century represent a rupture in the fundamental belief in equality of opportunity, as opposed to equality of results. "It is the egalitarian element in the American Creed that helped to create the consensus behind the civil rights revolution of the past thirty years," Lipset writes. "But the more recent focus of the civil rights movement, with its emphasis on substantive equality and preferential treatment, has forced the country up against the individualistic, achievement-oriented element in the Creed."

Here, Lipset ventures into the prescriptive. Invoking the military's success at integration, he writes that this "argues in favor of a large-scale national service effort." This would offer blacks career training and incentives for success—acculturation (though he does not use so freighted a term) to individualism and meritocracy. This policy lurch, rare in the book, is more appropriate for faculty argle-bargle than legislative corridors.

Despite the group-rights virus, Lipset concludes that the extent to which American exceptionalism "is still unique is astonishing." But if the Creed endures to this degree today, what of its prospects? Lipset notes a pessimistic current in public opinion over the past three decades. He is convincing, though, that critics have exaggerated many of the problems the nation faces "in the quest to demonstrate decay," and that the press has consistently mischaracterized national economic achievement.

Still, an alternative to the perceived "value crisis" is needed, and Lipset calls it "moral individualism." A "community in democratic pluralistic America is grounded in

Woody West is associate editor of the Washington Times.

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the individual as a thinking, moral actor, not in group solidarity." At this point, Lipset arrives—as do so many other critics—at television's supposed contribution to a loss of institutional trust through distortion, inherent and otherwise, in news and "entertainment." Lipset here summons Robert Putnam, he of the "bowling alone" thesis, the "privatizing" of America and the consequent decrease in "civic engagement."

But an increase in the malaise about politics and disdain for government, Lipset writes, may also reflect the growth of dependence on government since the 1930s: "Most people in the West, even those in the less statist United States, have come to rely on the state to solve most problems and to provide jobs, security for the aged, and medical care, as well as good schools. Socialism and communism have collapsed, but heavy reliance on what Robert Dahl describes as an increasingly complex and incomprehensible government has not."

How account then for the continued stability of the American system? Most Americans are not unhappy about their personal lives or prospects, he writes; if anything the opposite is true. "They still view the United States as a country that rewards personal integrity and hard work, as one that, government and politics apart, still works."

If we have cuddled closer under the collectivist blanket than is healthy, America is still "the most religious, optimistic, patriotic, rights-oriented, and individualistic" of countries, Lipset writes in this thoughtful book. It is also a characteristic of our national ethos to plunge between exultation and despond, about who we are and where we are going—a volatile combination of utopianism and pragmatism. Lipset's book is a rigorous antidote to those wild mood swings. ♦

Books

A Portrait of Decay

By Fred Siegel

Some time in the last 30 years, liberals and conservatives switched places in the poverty debate. It is conservatives—market Republicans and new Democrats—who are now most optimistic about incorporating the poor into mainstream America. Meanwhile, traditional liberals—like Herbert Gans, Michael Katz, Benjamin DeMott, and Peter Davis in recent books—have taken up the fatalistic view of poverty as retribution for sin.

Granted, that sin is "white racism" and its associated iniquity, "middle class values." Gans acknowledges "culturally divergent behavior" but insists there's no such thing as an underclass; the very term, he argues, reflects a conservative conspiracy to defame and degrade the poor. Katz can't decide whether the underclass is an old problem or a new one, but he's certain that the very poor bear no responsibility whatsoever for their plight. DeMott is beside himself that an African-American mother of seven could be held accountable for leaving her children alone in a house that caught fire, killing six of them. All three authors, like conservative fatalists of decades past, are filled with pity for the poor. They are less interested in instructing readers than in warming them with the fellowship of shared moral indignation. After announcing that "the poor have replaced the Communists as our principal enemies," Davis strikes the note common to all these books when he asserts that the reason we "persecute" the underclass is that it represents the "tendencies we fear in ourselves." What remains unchanged across the years is that the party that sees the poor through the lens of pity has the least to contribute to the debate.

CAMILO JOSE VERGARA DISPLAYS NONE OF THE VOYEURISM THAT MARS SO MANY PHOTO BOOKS ON THE UNDERCLASS.

It's worth noting, then, that one writer on the Left has recently produced a worthy book, if somewhat unwittingly. Camilo José Vergara's *The New American Ghetto* (Rutgers University Press, 200 pages, $49.95) is a compendium of inner-city photographs he's taken over the past 20 years that displays none of the voyeurism that has come to be the hallmark of photo books on the underclass. (Eugene Richards's acclaimed photo-essays, for example, are replete with images of fellatio and drug injections.) By returning to the same locations and repeatedly photographing, Vergara gives a sense of how inner-city settings have changed for the worse, much as family photographs viewed in sequence can underline aging and decay. Here are poignant shots of stately banks converted into porno theaters; decaying Detroit mansions surrounded by

Fred Siegel is a professor at Cooper Union and is writing a book on American cities.

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Camilo José Vergara from *The New American Ghetto*

prairie; stray dogs wandering through the shack-lined streets of North Camden, New Jersey.

The photographs are largely from New York, Newark, Camden, and Gary. But it is the "charred hulks and rubble strewn lots" of Detroit that are the emotional center of the book, with its 15,000 vacant buildings and 20 square miles of vacant land. In this otherworldly city, "supposedly immutable structures of reinforced concrete [fall] into decay, occasionally breaking their silence by shedding a gargoyle." This occasions a weird slum archeology, where "trees growing on a building roof indicate by their height and density how long it has been abandoned."

In an extended essay, Vergara tries to justify his photographs in policy terms, refers to the limitations of statistical evidence, and says that "the country needs an accurate image of the ghetto with which to devise national policies." But his purposes are also more personal: Having grown up in Chile and seen his alcoholic father drink away the family's wealth, he was drawn to similar scenes of decay in the United States.

Justifiably, he agrees with housing reformers who insist that "the physical evidence of trash, poor plumbing and the stink that goes with it . . . deepen feelings of being moral outcasts." But then Vergara proposes, in all seriousness, that the shell of what was once Detroit—particularly the abandoned skyscrapers, "our most sublime ruins"—be preserved as a penitential park, a monument to the moral failings of the white American middle class that callously abandoned Detroit in the name of progress.

THE AUTHOR CALLS FOR THE RUINS OF DETROIT TO BE PRESERVED AS A PENITENTIAL PARK, A MONUMENT TO THE MORAL FAILINGS OF THE MIDDLE CLASS.

There's little point in arguing with such a vision, except to point out that vast stretches of Detroit's recent history go unmentioned in Vergara's accounting. The turning point was the race riot of 1967, a "rebellion" of such frightening intensity that federal troops had to be called in to halt it. All that remained 20 years later was what the *Detroit News* would describe as "inscrutable megaliths in a wilderness of rubble so desolate that you can stand in the middle of Woodward Ave., the heart of the riot, at midday and not see a single auto for miles in any direction." Nor does Vergara ever mention the extraordinary annual auto-da-fé of Devil's Night, the night before Halloween, when bands of young Detroit men fan out to try to burn down their own neighborhoods. In Detroit, the riot not only never ended—it has been institutionalized. By 1987, twice as many buildings were being lost each year to arson as were burned in the riot.

Vergara has been touted as a latter-day Jacob Riis, whose 1890 *How the Other Half Lives* helped awaken American elites to the parlous condition of the urban poor. But he has none of Riis's important concern for acculturating and Americanizing those racked by poverty. His true predecessor was the French Romantic the Vicomte de Chateaubriand, a famous critic of progress emotionally overwhelmed by the ruins of medieval churches.

"Man himself," said Chateaubriand, "is but a decayed edifice, a wreck of sin and death." The ruins of Detroit are our own monument to the pieties of a faith gone awry. ♦

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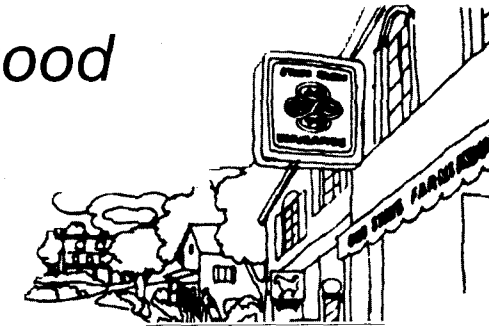

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